

## **The Legion** by Hauptbahnhof

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**Summary:** A continuation to the story started in my previous fanfic: A Not-So-Normal Life. Mike and Eleven are making their relation work and hang on to their friends despite all the chaos around them. Evil forces are working against them and something strange is happening from within Hawkins itself. (Rated T as in PG-13.)

# 1. Chapter 1: The Mission

A/N: Welcome to my third fanfic.

ATTENTION: This is the third part in a series. The first part is called 'The Unknown' you could probably get away without reading that one, but you need to read the second part called 'A Not-So-Normal Life'. This story picks up where the story got left off in that story. It is pretty important to know what happened there to understand what is happening here. If you have read my previous stories, welcome back! Thanks for sticking with me and I hope you enjoy.

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The alarms started going off.

"Shit." said an agent over the radio.

"Watch your language. Over." Agent Carter said over his radio from a van outside. He regretted speaking as soon as he did.

"What?!" asked another agent. "Watch your language'? Are we afraid kids are going to be listing to this? Over."

"I'm a middle school teacher. I can't help it. Forget I said anything." Carter said, embarrassed. "What happened in there? Over." he asked, hoping to get everyone's minds on more important things. Carter and the van were parked outside the Leadstone National Laboratory in Minnesota. A team was currently inside the lab, secretly moving through it to find any incriminating evidence they could about a program to use children with special abilities as spies and weapons. Carter knew that if they searched long enough, they would find some evidence. He knew this because he had adopted a boy that had been held there and researched for his abilities. But they didn't have much time now.

"We tried to get into the restricted section but Francis messed up opening the electronic lock. Over." the second agent said over the radio.

Carter looked at the security feeds they were getting in the van from

all the cameras in the lab. Since the alarms went off, a security team had been dispatched to find the intruders and Carter's team couldn't afford to be caught.

"Abort mission." he ordered over the radio. "There's some security guys heading your way but if you go out through the eastern exit you should be able to avoid them. Over."

"We copy. Coming your way. Over." the agent said.

"Head for the eastern door." Carter ordered the van driver. The driver stepped hard on the gas and started going to the other side of the lab while Carter tried to mess with the video feeds a little while longer. They were feeding a loop to the security office in the lab so their team wouldn't be spotted but it was hard to hold onto the signal with the van on the move. When the van stopped, Carter stopped messing with the knobs and switches on his control panel and went to the front of the van where he could see out the window. "Come on, come on." he whispered to himself "Get out of there".

Seven unbearably long seconds later, the big door burst open and the four secret agents ran out of the lab, over the fence and towards the van. Carter ran to the back of the van and flung open the door for his colleagues. They all made it into the van by the time the lab door opened again and a couple of security guys ran out. They tried to get to the black van but it was already driving away by the time they started.

"That was too close." Carter said.

"I feel obliged to agree." one of the other agents, Johnson, said, out of breath.

"Were you guys able to get anything useful out of that?" Carter asked.

"Not really." Johnson said. Carter sighed and settled in for the long drive they had back to Minneapolis.

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The next twelve hours were long for Agent Carter. The drive from Leadstone to Minneapolis took four hours. He turned in a short report

at the Coalition Base in the city before heading straight to the airport. He got there at 5 AM and was at the gate for his 7 AM flight at 5:30. He opened a book and got in some reading time before he had to board his airplane. The flight to Indianapolis took another two hours in which Carter was able to get the only sleep he had gotten in about two days. He was woken up when the 737 touched down in Indianapolis. After getting off the plane, he didn't have to wait at baggage claim since he only had a small duffel bag with some clothes and toiletries in it that he took as a carry-on.

He walked out to the far end of the parking lot and found his new car. Since he was being paid for both his job at The Coalition and his job as a chemistry teacher, he was able to trade in his BMW 325i for a new BMW M5. It was a great car, but he was too tired to appreciate it. He opened up the trunk, threw in his bag, then sleepily got behind the wheel. He turned the key and the BMW came to life. He put it into first and crept out of the parking spot, careful not to hit any other cars.

About forty five minutes later, Carter parked the car in front of the Byers' house in Hawkins. He knocked on the door and Joyce Byers answered in a blue vest, ready to go to work.

"Hi, Joyce." Carter said. "I just got back. I'm here to pick up Tim."

"Of course." Joyce said. "Come on in. He'll just be a minute." Carter walked inside and sat down in one of the chairs around the kitchen table.

"How was he?" Carter asked.

"He was great. Just like he always is." Joyce said while trying to save a very burnt omelet. "He loves spending time with El."

"Did I make you do that?" Carter asked.

"What?" asked Joyce.

"The omelet. Did it burn while you were getting the door for me? I could have waited a little longer."

"No. It was already burnt." Joyce said, now trying to scrape the burnt

egg and cheese off the pan. Carter didn't understand a lot of Joyce's logic in the kitchen. He knew that she was great at so many things, but cooking was not one of them.

A door opened down the hall. Carter leaned back to see Eleven coming down the hall with his adopted son, Tim.

"How was your time with Aunt Joyce?" Carter asked. Joyce wasn't Tim's real aunt, but they were such good friends that it made sense to call her his son's aunt.

"Fun." Tim said. "We played games." Tim's vocabulary was very simple, but improving every day.

"I'm glad to hear that. Do you have all your things?" Carter asked.

"Yes."

"OK then. We have to head home." Carter turned to Joyce. "Thanks again for having him. That was my last trip of the year and I really needed to go..." Joyce cut him off.

"Peter." Joyce was one of the only people that called Carter by his first name. "It's OK. I'm always glad to have him. Carter smiled and walked out of the house. He put Tim's bag in the trunk with his and they drove off together.

Tim had gone through a rigorous education during that summer just like Eleven had the summer before. He learned just as fast as her, but since he was going into the fifth grade instead of the seventh, there was a little less that he needed to learn before being caught up with the rest of the school. Carter was able to get him registered at the local elementary school and he was all set to start classes in September.

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Eleven's summer had gone even better than her first one in Hawkins. Mike finally taught her how to play Dungeons and Dragons and she joined in on a bunch of games, but she also had some friends who were girls. Sarah, Amy and Lucy were some of the only other people in the school who knew who she was, but that didn't make them see

her any differently. The girls had even joined the boys a little bit and sometimes they were one big group.

After Carter left with Tim, Eleven went outside and got the mail. She sorted through all the letters that they got and she was happy when she saw a letter addressed to her from the Hawkins School System. She opened it to find her new school schedule inside. She didn't look at it for long before picking up the phone to call Mike. It rang for a little bit before someone picked up.

"Hello." came Mike's mom's voice.

"Hello, Mrs. Wheeler. Is Mike there?" Eleven said.

"I think he's up in his room. Just give me a moment." she said. She covered the microphone on the handset a little bit but Eleven could still hear her calling for Mike; "Mike! Telephone for you!" A couple of moments later, the phone was picked up again and Eleven heard a completely different voice.

"Hello?" Mike said.

"Hi, Mike. It's El." Eleven said. She knew she didn't have to introduce herself, but she still liked to.

"Hi, El. How are you?" he asked.

"I'm pretty good. You?"

"I'm good."

"Did you get your school schedule?"

"I'm not sure. Let me check." There was a small click as Mike set the handset down on the counter and ran outside to check the mailbox. About thirty seconds later, he picked the handset up again and said; "I just got it." He was out of breath. Eleven was certain that he had ran to the mailbox so she didn't have to wait for him so long. She thought it was kind of cute that he went far out of his way sometimes to make her life a little easier. "Do you want me to call the whole group? We could meet at my house and find out what classes we have together."

"Sounds good. I'll call the girls." Eleven said, excited.

Fifteen minutes later, Eleven and Will arrived at Mike's front door. Will pushed the little button to ring the doorbell and they started to wait.

"Hey, guys!" a voice from behind them called. It was Lucas. He lived the closest to Mike so Will was a little surprised that they got there before him.

"Hey, Lucas!" Will called back as Lucas approached them. "Did you get your schedule?" Lucas pulled a folded-up piece of paper out of his pocket and showed Will and Eleven. They too took their papers out of their pockets to show him. The door opened and Mike greeted everyone.

It took another twenty minutes for everyone else to arrive. Sarah and Lucy showed up together followed shortly by Amy and then by Dustin. There was a little bit of talk before everyone settled down and started comparing schedules.

"My first class is math with Mrs. Hartson." Amy announced.

"Me too!" said Will.

"Me too." said Lucy. This continued on for a little while. Someone would announce one of their classes and they would figure out who else had it. It was pretty normal until Mike said;

"I have chemistry with Dr. Carter right before lunch again." Everyone else in the room said that they had the same class. The whole group made sure they got another year of chemistry so they could have another year with Dr. Carter. He was their favorite teacher. That was partly because he was simply a fun and engaging chemistry teacher, but also because he was a secret agent.

"Strange how we all have that class together." said Sarah.

"Not really." said Dustin. "I assume Carter pulled some strings to get all of us together."

"That makes sense." said Amy.

The group soon got bored discussing school and they turned to other things. The group ended up spending the entire day at Mike's house. Talking led to some petty arguments and everyone decided it would be best to just settle down and watch a movie. The TV upstairs was free. Everyone scrambled up to the living room to pick the best spots. Once Mike had finished setting up the movie, he sat down on the couch with Eleven (eliciting some teasing from Dustin and Lucas who were mainly upset because they had to sit on the floor). It was already the end of August, so as everyone watched the movie, they savored the last days of summer before they had to go back to school.

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As much as nobody wanted the summer to end, it had to happen at some point. Eleven woke up at about 6:00 and excitedly started making breakfast for herself. Joyce came into the kitchen about half an hour later.

"What are you doing up so early?" she asked.

"It's the first day of school." Eleven responded. "I'm excited." Eleven was already hard at work mixing up waffle batter. She loved Eggos but she figured that such a special day deserved some more special waffles.

"If only the boys could be more like you." Joyce joked. "Do you want some help?"

"No thanks. I think I've got it." Eleven said. She loved Joyce but she didn't really want burnt waffles. Joyce understood and instead put some bread in the toaster. Toast was one of the things she could make that tasted good. The golden-brown toast popped up a couple of minutes later and was ready for some butter as Eleven put the first batch of waffles in the iron. Jonathan was the next one to wake up despite the fact that he didn't have to go with to school.

"How's my college boy?" Joyce said, running over to pull Jonathan into a big hug. Jonathan's face turned a little red with embarrassment.

"Mom!" Jonathan smiled while pleading with Joyce for her to let him go. "College doesn't start for another week." Eleven looked up from



the waffle iron for a moment to see how awkward Jonathan looked. She smiled a little bit.

"I know. But it's the first first day of school that you aren't going to school." Joyce said in a voice as if Jonathan was still a little kid. The waffle iron buzzed and Eleven opened it. Jonathan took it as an opportunity to change the subject.

"Making waffles?" he asked.

"Yes." Eleven answered without stopping smiling. "Do you want one, college boy?" she said, teasing him.

"Oh, God. Not you too." Jonathan turned to Joyce. "Did you rope her into this?"

"No. She's just proud of her big brother." Joyce said while sitting back down at the kitchen table. She resumed buttering her toast.

"Where's Will?" she asked.

"Probably still asleep like always." Jonathan said. He knew that his mother still got a little scared when Will didn't show up to breakfast on time. Jonathan walked down the hall and opened the door to Will's room. "Come on, Will. It's your last first day of middle school. You don't want to be late." Will groaned from under the covers.

"Five more minutes." he pleaded.

"No." Jonathan said while laughing. "El's making waffles. I bet if you ask nicely she'll give one to you." Will perked up a little bit at the mention of waffles. He didn't like them nearly as much as Eleven, but they were still a great motivator to get him out of bed.

Five minutes later, Will was all dressed and sat down to find a waffle already on a plate at his spot at the table. The rest of breakfast consisted of laughing, nostalgia about school years past, and teasing 'college boy' Jonathan. Eleven eventually noticed the clock and saw it was 7:30.

"We have to go!" she remarked.

"You're right." Will said. He grabbed one more slice of toast from the table and grabbed his backpack.

"Bye, mom." both Will and Eleven said in unison as they ran out the door to get to their bikes.

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Will and Eleven had left a little later than they wanted to do, but they were still not late. The bike racks were not very full because a lot of parents wanted to drive their kids to the first day of school. They went in and Will's math class was right by the front door. Eleven went in with him for a moment to see if Amy and Lucy were already there. Amy was nowhere to be found, but Lucy had already picked out a seat near the front. Eleven quickly said hi to Lucy then left to go to history class.

Eleven enjoyed school and wanted to get a seat in the front of class. She got called a nerd sometimes by passing people that didn't matter to her, but she didn't care. She saw it more as a good descriptor for what she was rather than an insult. When she got to the history classroom, only a few other seats were taken. She took a seat right at the front, but off to the left hand side. She opened her backpack and pulled out a book. There were still about fifteen minutes left until the bell was supposed to ring and there was nobody in the room that Eleven knew so she felt like reading was a good use of her time. About ten minutes later, Lucas wandered into the room too. Eleven knew he had the same first period class as her and she had been waiting for him to show up. Lucas looked around for a moment. He didn't want to sit right at the front, but he also didn't want to sit around complete strangers. He sighed and took the seat right behind Eleven.

"How's your first day going?" Lucas asked, somewhat awkwardly. He knew not much had happened yet that day that she could talk about, but he couldn't think of anything else to say to start some conversation.

"It's going pretty good." Eleven answered. She put a small piece of paper in her book to mark her page and then closed the book entirely. "I made some waffles this morning."

"Were they good?" Lucas asked, simply trying to keep the conversation going.

"Yes." Eleven answered. The small talk kept going for another couple of minutes until the bell rang.

The teacher walked in the room and closed the door. He introduced himself as Mr. Bolden and then went straight into a lecture about the causes of the French Revolution. All of the students had expected the first day to be laid back and easy so everyone scrambled to their backpacks when they realized they had to actually start taking notes. Everyone except Eleven of course. She already had a designated yellow notebook open and was making detailed notes of the lecture.

The bell rang after what seemed like an impossibly long time. Eleven carefully packed everything in her bag and stood up. She waited a little bit for Lucas to finish getting everything in his bag too. He was very organized so it took him a little while to put everything back in it's proper place. Eventually, he was done and they walked out of the room.

"So..." said Lucas once they were a little bit away from the room. "That teacher was super boring." Eleven didn't usually notice how interesting or boring a teacher was until someone mentioned it to her. She thought about it for a moment then came to the same conclusion.

"Now that I think about it... I agree." she said. They got to the end of the hall and had to separate to go to their different classes. Eleven turned the corner and eventually came to the honors math classroom. She walked in and scanned the faces in the room. She was surprised to see Mike was sitting right at the front of the room. She knew that she and Mike had that class together, but Mike hated sitting at the front of the room. Eleven walked over to him and sat down.

"Why are you sitting all the way in the front?" she asked.

"I thought you would like it." Mike said.

"But you hate sitting in the front."

"But you like sitting in the front and I like you more than I like sitting in the back." Eleven didn't exactly know how to respond to this. She chose to just smile and get out her math supplies. Mike smiled too and laughed a little bit when she turned away.

The class started and everyone got quiet pretty quickly. This teacher was much more interesting than the history teacher. She introduced herself as Mrs. Burns and she turned out to be a lot of fun. She didn't actually take any of the class time to teach math, choosing instead to talk to the students and get to know them a little bit. Eleven decided she liked Mrs. Burns. Before they knew it, the bell was ringing and everyone was packing up in the midst of the most recent joke Mrs. Burns had told. Eleven and Mike made their way out of the classroom and rushed to the class they were most excited about: chemistry.

The room was pretty empty by the time they got there. Dr. Carter was the only teacher in the town that taught classes at both the middle school and the high school, so they assumed he was on his way over from the high school which was right next to the middle school. Mike rushed to the seat in the front corner and Eleven followed soon after and sat down next to him. Dustin and Amy came together from their Geography class that they had together and sat right behind Mike and Eleven. The rest of the group trickled in and sat together. The bell rang just as Will took his seat right behind Dustin.

Dr. Carter quickly walked into the classroom with a big leather briefcase. He set the briefcase down on the table at the front of the room and looked up at his new class with a smile. He looked just like he did on the first day of school the previous year. He had on a white dress shirt with a green plaid sweater-vest and some big fake glasses on his face. He didn't actually need the glasses, but he thought it helped with his disguise the previous year so he kept them.

"Hello, everyone." He started enthusiastically. "My name is Dr. Carter and welcome to advanced chemistry." He looked a little more closely at all the faces around the room. "I think I remember most of you from intro to chemistry last year and most of you should remember me. We're really going to do much today because it's the first day of school and we're going to ease slowly into the year rather than immediately rip all of you away from summer." There was a general

murmur around the room that indicated of Carter's teaching methods. "We're not actually going to learn anything new today, but we are going to review from last year by blowing some stuff up." The feeling of approval in the room turned to praise as everyone got excited for the lesson.

The remainder of the class was quite exciting. Carter took about two minutes to review how to use a fire extinguisher, then he set the big extinguisher on Dustin's desk and named him the 'fire marshal'. Carter demonstrated a lot of reactions and pretty much everyone in the room rushed to get their hand in the air whenever he asked for a volunteer. By the end of the class, everyone had got to blow something up except for Dustin (but he did get to extinguish Amy's desk).

The bell rang to end class sooner than Carter thought it would. The bell rang right after he lit a strip of magnesium on fire. Everyone stood up to go to lunch and the room was pretty much empty by the time the metal was done burning. Carter set his tools down on the table, took off his safety goggles, and went over and locked the door. He turned around to see the eight kids that always stayed after class to meet with him.

"So... how was everyone's summer?" he asked.

"Nobody was attacked telepathically if that's what you're asking." Amy said.

"You told us at the end of last school year that you were working on a mission all summer. What happened?" asked Mike. Carter settled into a stool behind the table and began a long explanation.

"I spent most of the summer in Hawkins. I was able to get most of my work done from home while helping Tim get ready for the school year." Everyone knew Carter's adopted son Tim was actually Twelve, a kid that managed to escape from the same horrific research program that Eleven did. "But I went on two trips to lead field missions. We went to the two labs that were of interest last year. In July we went to Westcliffe in Colorado and last week we went to Leadstone in Minnesota." He took a quick look around the room to see what everyone was thinking. Nobody was daring to look away

and miss part of the story. "We didn't get much on those missions. A bunch of alarms went off in Minnesota, but in Colorado, we were able to determine that that lab is where Ten came from." Eleven seemed to get uncomfortable and Mike's fists clenched at the mention of Ten. He really hated her for what she tried to do to Eleven and his sister. Carter noticed the slightly elevated stress level in the room. "Other than that, there is nothing else I have to report. I'm back here just like I was last year and will make sure that nothing can happen to any of you."

Nobody in the room wanted to say anything else so they just left the room and went to lunch. The tense mood that was present in the chemistry room hung around for a little longer, but it went away immediately once Dustin tripped and face-planted in a bowl of Jello he was carrying and everyone started laughing. The lighter mood that started there stayed with the group for the rest of the day.

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Deep in the bowels of the Hawkins National Laboratory, something was happening. The bottom levels were, for the most part, completely sealed off. However, one day during their routine inspection of the bottom levels, someone noticed a crack in the wall. Over the following months, they noticed the crack get slowly bigger and bigger. They called in some geologists and civil engineers to try to figure out what was happening, but nobody could explain it.

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A/N: Thank you so much for reading. This story will be updated regularly, but not as often as my previous story (I won't be posting multiple chapters in one day). If you are intrigued, please follow the story and review this chapter and the ones that will follow. My previous story (and this story for that matter) benefited greatly from reader-input and the comments you guys leave will directly help shape the story and the characters. Thanks so much for reading and come back when I have written more (unless I already have, in that case just go to the next chapter)!

## 2. Chapter 2: The Sick Day

Carter didn't teach a class during the last period of the day. Normally, he would have stayed at least until the last bell rang because he wanted to be professional, but on this particular day, he left about fifteen minutes early. He put his briefcase in the trunk of his car and was in the elementary school parking lot about five minutes before class was scheduled to end. He got out and walked over to the entrance of the school where a couple of other parents were waiting. After a little bit of standing, a woman started to walk over to him. Carter knew that he had seen her before, but he couldn't quite figure out where.

"Hello." said the woman. "My name is Karen Wheeler." Carter mentally slapped himself in the face. This was Mike's mom. How could he not have noticed that immediately?

"Hello." Carter said. He extended his hand for a handshake which Karen respectfully took.

"You look familiar." she said. "I know I know you from somewhere but I can't place it." Carter didn't feel so bad about not knowing who she was for a moment.

"I'm Peter Carter. I'm a chemistry teacher at the middle and high schools."

"Oh! That's right. My son is in your class. He never was too interested in chemistry until last year when you started."

"He is one of my best students. I'm glad to have him." Carter knew that Mike was generally a good student, but him and his whole group seemed to put extra effort into Carter's chemistry class.

"What are you doing here?" Karen asked.

"I don't teach a class during the last period so I decided to come and pick my son up from his first day of school."

"I didn't know you had a son."

"I adopted him in June. He's such a great kid." Karen opened her mouth to say more, but one of the doors opened and a flood of small kids poured out of the building. Karen looked at all the faces of the kids and eventually saw the one she was looking for.

"Holly!" she called. A small kindergartner with pigtails looked up then ran over to Karen. Karen turned back to Carter and said; "It was nice talking to you, but I think I have to get this little one home."

"It was nice to see you too." Carter said. They all exchanged goodbyes and Carter walked into the building. After walking down a couple of hallways, he got to the fifth grade classroom he was looking for. He walked in to find Tim sitting silently at a desk while the teacher cleaned up the room.

"Hello." said Carter. "You must be Mrs. Tiller." The teacher put down what she was working on and went over to go greet Carter. She was an older woman, maybe 60 years old. Apparently she was Mike, Dustin, Will and Lucas' teacher when they were in fifth grade.

"Yes I am." she said. "And you must be Mr. Carter."

"Dr. Carter." he corrected. He didn't like correcting people but it had become a habit that he couldn't seem to break.

"Oh. I am so sorry."

"It's no problem." Carter said. "I just wanted to check in on how Tim's first day went."

"Well..." Mrs. Tiller started. "He was a little quiet today, but he is certainly a bright student. You and Mrs. Carter should be very proud of him."

"There is no Mrs. Carter." Carter replied, a little awkwardly.

"Oh. Again, I am very sorry."

"No need to be." Carter smiled politely. "Thank you for meeting with me."

"Thank you for coming. I am very glad to be teaching your son this



year." Mrs. Tiller said.

"Tim." Carter called. Tim smiled and ran over to him. "It's time to go." He turned back to Mrs. Tiller. "Again, thank you. Goodbye." Tim looked at Mrs. Tiller too and said simply;

"Goodbye." He waved a little bit then Carter left with him.

Once at the car, Carter unlocked the doors and Tim sat down at his normal spot in the back seat and Carter started up the car. He carefully backed out of the spot and once he was out of the parking lot, he started to talk to Tim in the back seat.

"How was your first day of school?" he asked.

"Good." Tim replied.

"Can you describe it a little more?" Carter asked. He was surprised by how much Tim said after that. He was usually really quiet but he spent the whole ride describing every detail of his day at school. Carter knew that school would be good for Tim, but he didn't know it would help this quickly. After a while, Tim looked out the window and noticed that they weren't going home.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"Surprise." Carter said. He smiled and quickly looked at Tim in the rear-view mirror. Tim was confused and spent a little time just looking out the window before Carter parked the car in the town square right in front of the ice cream shop. Tim got excited when they walked into the shop, but he got even more excited when Carter said;

"You can get anything you want."

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The time after school was a little different for the middle school students. Mike got home at about 3:30 and got out his homework. He didn't have much, but he didn't think he would have any because it was the first day of school. He promised himself that he would get right to work on all the assignments he had, but he instead spent the first hour on his Super-Comm with Lucas. Lucas's mom eventually

told Lucas that he needed to stop talking to Mike and work on his homework, so Mike decided that was a good idea for him too.

He got started on his history assignment, but after about fifteen minutes, he got interrupted by Nancy.

"How's the homework going?" she asked, poking her head through Mike's open door.

"Pretty slow when your sister is trying to talk to you." Mike said.

"Hey, I was just trying to make conversation. I'm pretty bored in my room."

"Just because you don't have to do any work for the next week doesn't mean you are allowed to rub it in my face." Mike said, teasing her a little bit. He put down his pencil and looked up at his sister. She had graduated from Hawkins High School at the end of the previous school year along with Jonathan and would start college in Michigan the next week. Mike had grown close to her ever since their fight against the Demogorgon. He was sad to see her go, but he was also proud of her for getting into a good college.

Mike chose to ignore his homework for another hour to talk to Nancy and they only stopped when they were called down to dinner. The family ate dinner together every night. On the table was chicken with mashed potatoes, one of Mike's favorites. Holly talked about her school day for most of dinner while the parents and Nancy intently listened. Mike wasn't paying much attention. He was only trying to finish his dinner so he could work on his homework.

"Mike! Slow down." Karen said, a little disgusted by the speed at which Mike was eating.

"Sorry, Mom. I need to work on my homework." Mike said, not looking up from the food he was shoveling in his mouth.

"I understand you have work to do, but maybe you could just slow down a little bit so you don't choke." Mike slowed down for about two minutes, then increased speed again until he was done. As soon as his plate was clear, Mike said goodbye and ran up the stairs. He sat

down and finally got working on the work that should have been done already.

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Eleven flushed the toilet and went over to wash her hands. She got them clean, but noticed that the water just pooled in the sink. She opened the door and called down the hallway.

"Jonathan! The sink is clogged again." Jonathan was in the kitchen helping Joyce prepare dinner. He grabbed a bottle of drain cleaner from under the kitchen sink and went over to the bathroom.

"You know, I'm going to be gone next week. You're going to have to learn how to do this yourself." he said while opening the bottle.

"I know. But I thought I would take advantage of you while I can." Eleven said smiling. Jonathan smiled back and got to work. Eleven payed close attention while Jonathan explained everything he was doing. Once he was done, he put the lid back on the bottle and rushed back to the kitchen to make sure Joyce hadn't ruined the food too much. Joyce knew she was a terrible cook, so she had no idea how Jonathan was so good at it. When he would cook dishes by himself, they were delicious and almost restaurant quality. Eleven walked back to the kitchen with him.

"How was your day, El?" Joyce asked. She had just gotten home from work and hadn't had a chance to talk to Eleven yet because Eleven was finishing her homework.

"It was pretty good. Mike sat in the very front in math just to sit by me." Eleven said.

"Mike is a pretty good guy." Joyce said while draining water from some broccoli. She had always liked Mike. He was a great friend to Will for many years, but once she saw how well he treated Eleven, she just liked him even more. "Do you have a favorite teacher yet?"

"Probably Dr. Carter because of everything he's done for us outside of school. But other than him, I like my English teacher."

"Who's that?" asked Jonathan.

"Miss Maple." Eleven answered. "Did you ever have her?"

"No. She started teaching about two years after I left middle school. But I've heard some good things about her."

"She was a lot of fun in class today."

Once the food was done, Joyce called Will from his room and they all sat down for dinner. The conversation about the first day of school continued during the meal. When they were all done, Joyce and Jonathan cleaned up. Eleven, being responsible, went straight to bed and Will decided to do the same because he had nothing better to do. Joyce and Jonathan stayed up a little later watching TV, but they went to bed soon after.

---

Eleven's alarm clock rang at 6:30 the next morning. She was awake about five minutes before it and was already getting dressed by the time it went off. She was in the middle of getting her pants on when the clock went off from the other side of the room. However, one of the nice things about having telepathic powers is that she didn't have to get up to stop the annoying beeping.

Joyce was already in the kitchen when Eleven got there to start making her breakfast. Joyce was having another go at making an omelet.

"How did you sleep?" she asked Eleven. She didn't look up from the skillet when she asked. She was determined to make an edible omelet this time.

"Pretty good." Eleven said. She went to the freezer and got out one of the ever-present boxes of Eggos. She had never seen Joyce buy them, but they were always there. She asked one time where they were coming from but Joyce didn't know either. After a little investigation, they found out that Chief Hopper had been secretly been stocking their freezer with Eleven's favorite food as a way to help out. Joyce used a spatula to pick her omelet up from the pan and set it down on a waiting plate.

"Yes!" exclaimed Joyce after turning off the stove. Eleven looked over

at the plate to see what she was so excited about. It certainly looked better than Joyce's previous attempt at an omelet, but Eleven wouldn't have been as excited about it as Joyce was.

Jonathan walked into the kitchen and looked at the plate.

"You made this?" he asked his mom.

"Yes I did. It looks good, doesn't it?" Joyce replied. She was very proud of herself. Jonathan thought for a moment. He was hesitant to use the word 'good' but he didn't want to discourage Joyce.

"It's better than the last one." was what he ended up saying.

"That's good enough for me." Joyce said as she began to dig in. The toaster finished and two hot waffles popped up. Eleven put them on her own plate, sat down next to Joyce, and started eating. Eventually, Joyce noticed that Will wasn't there again. "Where is Will now?"

"He was still in bed when I got up." Jonathan said. He had been sharing a room with Will ever since Eleven had moved in with them. Joyce stood up and went over to the boys' room to get Will out of bed.

"Come on, Will. You need to get up for school." she said as she opened the door. Will groaned a little bit in bed and turned over to face Joyce.

"I don't feel good." he said. Joyce kneeled down next to him and put her hand on his forehead.

"You're burning up!" she exclaimed. "You should stay home today. I'll call the school to let them know. Both Jonathan and I have to work today, are you OK being home alone or should I take the day off too?"

"No. I'll be fine." Joyce stood up and gave a sympathetic smile.

"OK." she said before leaving the room. She called the school office to tell them that Will was sick and Eleven brought him some breakfast and water. Eleven left for school so she didn't get there late and once Joyce was done on the phone, she went back to talk to Will with a

bucket in hand. "I called the school, they know you're going to be absent." She set the bucket down next to Will's bed. "If you need to throw up, please do so in the bucket. If you need anything, call me at work."

"OK." Will said.

"I need to go. I hope you get better." Joyce leaned in and gave Will a kiss on the forehead before leaving.

---

Eleven's first two classes of the day were more or less normal. She walked to chemistry with Mike and they were once again the first ones there, but this time the door was locked, so they just waited outside. Amy came next.

"Hey, El. Where's your brother?" Amy asked. "He wasn't in math today."

"He's sick." Eleven said.

"Like actually sick? Or is he just faking it to get out of school?" Amy asked. She was joking, she knew Will wouldn't skip school.

"I only saw him a little bit but he looked pretty sick." Eleven said.

"Tell him to get well soon." said Mike. About fifteen more kids gathered outside the door before Carter showed up and unlocked it. It only took about two minutes for everyone to get situated, then Carter started;

"Sorry about the locked door." he started. "I guess they lock the doors every night and because I teach my first two classes at the high school, I can't get here early to unlock it." Nobody really seemed interested in this except for Mike. He had come to expect that when something was different in Hawkins, it was a bad thing, so Carter's explanation helped him feel a little at ease.

Carter started the class by introducing their first topic. It was their first real day of class because Carter hadn't taught anything new on the first day of school. Everyone payed close attention to Carter's lively method of instruction and they were all surprised when the bell

rang so soon. Once everyone else had left, Carter locked the door and they started their daily meeting.

"Where's Will?" he asked. It was very out of character for Will to miss a day of school. He was one of the few students that got a perfect attendance record the previous year.

"He's sick." said Eleven for the second time that day.

"Oh." said Carter, sounding a little surprised. "Send my best wishes." Eleven nodded a little bit and Carter continued. "I really have nothing to report except that Tim had a great first day of school yesterday." The others were happy to hear this. They had all spent at least a little time with little Tim during the summer to help him get ready for the school year. They talked about Tim for about five more minutes, then went to lunch.

---

Eleven got home after school. No cars were outside, so she assumed that Joyce and Jonathan were still at work. She walked over to Will's room and knocked on the door.

"Will..." she said softly through the door. "...it's El. Are you OK? Can I come in?"

"Yes." came faintly from the other side of the door. Eleven opened it as quietly as she could and walked in. The first thing she noticed was that she herself got a mild headache as soon as she got near Will, but she didn't think too much of it at the time.

"Are you OK?" she asked Will who was buried under every blanket in the room.

"Better than this morning." Will said while giving a small strained smile. Eleven smiled back.

"Are you hungry?" she asked.

"A little."

"I'll go make you something." she said. She went into the kitchen and made Will a can of chicken soup, something she heard was good to

feed to sick people. It was ready a couple of minutes later and she brought the bowl of warm soup in to Will's room for him. She handed him the bowl and said;

"Oops. I forgot a spoon. I'll be right back." She ran back to the kitchen and got a spoon out of the drawer. Once back in Will's room, she handed it to him and he slowly began to start eating. She looked over at the big red bucked next to Will's bed. If there was vomit in it, she would clean it out like Joyce had done for her one time when she was sick. She looked inside and all she saw was some strange slime.

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A/N: I think that it will be good if I write a chapter every couple days like this. Please let me know what you think of this as well as how the story is going so far! Thanks!



### 3. Chapter 3: Moving Day

A/N: Apparently chapters aren't going to be published on any sort of schedule, just whenever I get them done. Like always, please review. I appreciate it a lot. Thanks.

---

Will was feeling better the next day. Or at least, better enough that he was able to go to school. Joyce told him that he could stay home again if he wanted, but he decided that he didn't want to miss any more school. He rode his bike to school. Eleven rode her bike too and went a little slower than normal so she could stay with him. They got to school pretty early and locked their bikes up outside. Eleven walked with Will to math class like she did on the first day. She didn't see Amy or Lucy there, so she simply said goodbye to Will and went to history class.

Eleven was able to read a fair amount in her book before Lucas showed up to class. She put the bookmark back in to keep her place and started talking to him.

"Good morning, Lucas." Eleven said very brightly.

"What's so good about it?" Lucas asked.

"What's so bad about it?" asked Eleven.

"I had to wake up early to get to school."

"It's already Wednesday." Eleven said, trying to encourage her friend.

"You only have to wake up two more times this week."

"I guess you're right. How are always so positive about this?"

"I appreciate the opportunity I got." Eleven got. Lucas felt a little guilty. He had taken school, his family and his whole life for granted, but Eleven didn't have any of that until two years before.

"How's Will?" Lucas asked, trying to change the subject.

"Better." Eleven answered. "He's still not perfect, but he's much better

than yesterday."

"Good." said Lucas. He was about to say something else, but he got cut off by the bell. Mr. Bolden stood up from his desk and started droning on about the French Revolution.

---

The chemistry room door was once again locked when they got there. Mike and Eleven were the first ones, as had become the norm. Amy was the next to show up with Dustin in tow. Amy looked extremely excited by something while Dustin looked unbelievably bored.

"Do you guys want to hear some gossip?" asked Amy.

"It's nothing. You have no evidence to back that up." Dustin groaned. He had apparently already heard the gossip that Amy was so excited about.

"Shut up." Amy retorted, her expression turning sour. "Yes I do."

"What is it?" asked Mike. Amy looked over at him and Eleven, the excitement returning to her face.

"I was in the teachers' lounge yesterday with Mr. Bolden during 6th period to help make some copies and I saw Carter talking to Miss Maple." Amy said excitedly.

"Your English teacher?" asked Mike.

"Yes. What other Miss Maples are there in the school?" Amy sounded a little bit annoyed.

"I just wanted to make sure." Mike said, suddenly on the defensive. "Continue."

"That's about it." Amy said, a little disappointed. "But they were... like... looking at each other."

"You really are the best storyteller ever, aren't you?" Dustin said sarcastically.

"Shut up." said Amy for the second time in that conversation. It

seemed to be becoming her favorite phrase. "There was like... something... between them." Amy was wildly moving her hands in front of herself, as if that would help tell the story better. "I guess you had to be there."

"At the moment... I'm with Dustin." Mike announced. "You don't have enough evidence for that to mean anything, but I might change my mind later if I hear more."

"Ugh." Amy said, annoyed. "What about you, El?"

"What about me?" asked a slightly confused Eleven.

"Whose side are you on?" Amy asked.

"I... don't know." Eleven was eventually able to say. She still wasn't entirely sure what Amy's story meant.

"It doesn't really matter." said Mike. He saw that Eleven was a little uncomfortable, so he tried to comfort her a little bit.

It was obvious that Amy wanted to tell her story to the rest of the group, but Carter showed up at about the same time as the rest of them, so she decided to hold on to her little piece of gossip until lunch. When she did finally tell the rest of the group, the reactions were not what she was expecting.

"I really think you're making a big deal about something that's not really there." Sarah said while eating an apple.

"I have to agree." said Lucy. Amy got a little angry at this.

"I'm making a big deal about something that's not really there?" Amy asked. Her voice shot up a couple of octaves when she did. She took a deep breath and calmed down. "OK, fine. I'll shut up about it for now. But when we're all at their wedding, I get to say 'I told you so'. OK?"

"I see a couple of problems with that." said Dustin. He took another bite of his chicken nugget before continuing. "First of all: 'their wedding'? That's jumping to conclusions a little bit." Amy opened her mouth to say something, but Dustin was quicker. "Second of all: why would we all be at their wedding?"

"Because we're Carter's friends. He would invite us." Amy said.

"But how would he explain to Miss Maple the fact that he's good friends with a bunch of middle schoolers?" Dustin asked. "Unless he wanted to come up with an elaborate and unconvincing lie, he would have to tell her that he's a secret agent and tell her about everything we've done together. Think about it." Amy did think about it.

"Fine," she eventually said. "Maybe we won't be at the wedding, but when they do get married, I get to say 'I told you so'."

"Fine." Lucas said, sounding like he was giving up despite not being a big part of the argument that proceeded. "If and only *if* they get married, you can say you told us so."

"That's all I wanted to hear." Amy said, sitting up straight and acting triumphant.

Eleven looked over to Will to see how he was doing. He was resting his hand on his arm while picking at his food.

"Will..." Eleven called over to him. He looked up at her. "Are you sure you're feeling well enough to be here? Mom would understand if..."

"No. I'm fine." Will interrupted Eleven then continued to pick at the peas on his tray. Eleven was a little worried about him, but she knew he could take care of himself.

---

The school week finally ended and the weekend came around. Everyone was happy for the opportunity to sleep in except for Mike, Will and Eleven. Mike was going over to Lucas' house for the day and Holly was going to one of her friends' houses while their parents drove Nancy to Michigan to move her into her dorm. Will and Eleven were going with Jonathan to New York to help him move in. They were going to explore the city after getting all of Jonathan's things into his dorm, then spend the night in a hotel and drive back on Sunday. Eleven was excited. This was going to be her very first road trip and her first time in a hotel. She woke up at 4 AM and couldn't get back to sleep. She decided to go and make breakfast for everyone before Joyce was able to. They had already packed the car the night

before and they wanted to leave by 5:00. Eleven was done with breakfast at about 4:15, at which point both Joyce and Jonathan came out of their rooms almost simultaneously.

"What smells so good?" asked Joyce.

"I made breakfast." said Eleven.

"What are you doing up so early?" Jonathan asked his little sister with a smile.

"I got excited." Eleven replied while putting four plates of breakfast on the table. They began to eat, despite the fact that Will wasn't there. Joyce decided to let him sleep a little longer, but at 4:45, she decided it was time to get him up. She walked over to his room, slowly opened the door, and softly said;

"Will... it's time to get up. You can sleep in the car, but first you need to get dressed and eat breakfast." Will groaned and whimpered a little bit.

"I think I'm sick again." he said. Joyce was concerned. She walked over to him and put her hand on his forehead. He was hotter than he was a couple of days prior and he was sweating a little bit too. Joyce thought for a little bit, then eventually asked;

"Do you feel well enough to come with us?"

"No." Will said. She believed him.

"I'm going to call the Sinclairs. You can spend the day with Mike and Lucas."

"No."

"No?" Joyce was a little confused.

"I just want to stay here." Joyce thought a little bit more. She could understand that Will didn't want to go anywhere.

"OK. I'm still going to call Mrs. Sinclair and have her check up on you every once in a while. I'm really sorry that I can't stay here but I need

to go with Jonathan."

"It's OK." Will said very weakly. Joyce gave a weak smile and Will tried to smile back too. She really wanted to stay there with him, but she really had to go. Joyce, Jonathan and Eleven piled into the car. Joyce took one last look at the house before starting the engine and driving off. Once they were on the highway, Eleven rested her head against the window and fell asleep.

---

She had a strange dream. It wasn't anything bad, just strange. She saw Mike's room through his eyes. He was packing a backpack with some Dungeons and Dragons stuff, some comic books, and his Super-Comm. Once he was done with that, he went over to the bathroom. He looked in the mirror. It was obvious that he had just gotten out of bed because of how crazy his hair was. He started brushing it and Eleven thought to herself, 'He looks funny with crazy hair.' Mike suddenly stopped brushing his hair and looked rapidly around the room.

"El..." he called out. "Are you there?" Eleven was confused, but didn't do anything about it. Mike eventually just started brushing his hair again.

---

By the time Eleven woke up, the sun had risen. Eleven yawned and stretched.

"What time is it?" she asked. Jonathan looked at the watch on his arm.

"Just about 11:30." he said. Eleven was surprised by how long she slept.

"Oh. OK." Eleven looked out the window and noticed that the land around them looked pretty much like it did in Indiana, but slightly different. "Where are we?" Jonathan, who was sitting in the passenger seat, picked up a big map from the dashboard. He looked out the window for a moment, then back at the map.

"We're right about here." he said, leaning back and pointing to a spot

on the map so Eleven could see. "We're almost to Pennsylvania." Eleven nodded, then settled in. She realized they still had a long drive ahead of them.

---

Mike was sure he had heard Eleven's voice. It startled him for a moment, but he convinced himself that he didn't actually hear anything.

"Mike!" Karen called up the stairs. "We need to leave. Are you ready?"

"Just a sec!" Mike yelled back. He left the bathroom, picked up his backpack, then ran down the stairs. "You don't have to drive me. I can ride my bike. It's not far." He said to his mother as she got her keys.

"I know I don't have to, but I think I should thank Lucas's family for taking you today." Karen said. "Holly! We have to go." She called. Holly ran in from the living room. When they got outside, Mike saw his dad trying to stuff all of Nancy's things in the family station wagon while Nancy stood awkwardly off to the side. She looked like she wanted to help, but she didn't want to get in the way of her dad's work. "Ted, she doesn't need all this stuff." Karen said as they walked past.

"I think we should bring it and we can bring back what she doesn't want." Ted replied, not looking away from the car.

"Do I get a say in this?" asked Nancy.

"Apparently not." Mike said. He, Holly and Karen continued on to the family's other car that was parked in the street to allow Ted the space he needed to pack the station wagon.

They drove over to Lucas's house. Mike hopped out and rang the doorbell, Karen following close behind him. Lucas's mom came to greet them. Karen thanked her for having Mike for the day, then she left to go drop off Holly. Mike went up to Lucas's room. He knocked on the door and Lucas said for him to come in.

"Hey." said Mike.

"Hey." Lucas said. He looked a little concerned. "Did you hear about Will?"

"No. What's wrong with him?"

"His mom called early this morning. Apparently he's sick again. Too sick to go to New York to move Jonathan in to NYU."

"That sounds bad. Can we go visit him?"

"His mom asked my mom if she could check on him every once in a while. She gave us a key to their house a couple of years ago."

"Can we come with?"

"I'll ask." Lucas went downstairs and came back a couple of minutes later. "She said we could come with."

---

Lucas's mom cooked lunch. The boys ate and she packed up some extra to bring to Will. Lucas and Mike packed some games and comic books for him. They drove over at about 1:00. Lucas's mom opened the door and the boys walked over to Will's room. They knocked on the door, and heard faintly;

"Come in." Lucas softly opened the door and he and Mike walked in.

"Hey, Will." Mike said. "How are you?"

"Not so good." said Will. He coughed quietly.

"We brought you some food, and games." Lucas said, holding out the bag they had brought. Will sat up. He struggled a little bit, but he was eventually able to do it.

"Thanks." Will said weakly as he looked in the bag. They all talked for about 45 minutes, but then they decided that it was time to let Will rest. They left him the bag and he picked out a comic book to start reading as they left the room.

Mike and Lucas met up with Lucas's mom in the living room, then they drove back to Lucas's house.



"I really feel sorry for Will." Lucas said.

"Yeah, me too." Mike said. "I'm sure his mom will bring him to the doctor on Monday."

---

Joyce, Jonathan and Eleven got to New York City at about 6:00 PM. It was a little later than Joyce wanted, but they still weren't late. Jonathan checked in, got the key to his dorm room, then went back outside to the car.

"Do you have everything?" Joyce asked. Jonathan didn't say anything, instead he just held up some paperwork and his key to show her. "Good. Do you know who your roommate is?"

"It's some guy named Nicholas. Apparently he's from California and won't be getting here until tomorrow. I guess his flight got delayed of something."

Jonathan didn't have much stuff to move into his dorm, so it only took them two trips to get everything up to the second floor of the building. It took about an hour to set everything up, at which point Jonathan had to leave for orientation. He gave both Joyce and Eleven big hugs, they both called him 'college boy' one more time, then he had to leave.

Joyce and Eleven spent the evening walking around the city. Eleven had been to Indianapolis a couple of times, but New York was something completely different. Simply the scale of everything was astounding. When the sun set, the amount of lights and sound that stayed around were amazing, it seemed like the city never went to sleep.

At about 9:00, they decided to go and check into their hotel. They were going to get a cheap hotel in New Jersey, but Carter insisted on booking them a nice hotel in the middle of the city as a 'thank you' for helping out with Tim so much during the summer. They went to the address that Carter had given them and saw a massive majestic building.

"This can't be right." Joyce said, looking at the paper with the address

again.

"Why not?" Eleven asked.

"This is a luxury hotel, this thing costs a fortune to stay in." Joyce said. She couldn't think of anything else to do, so they eventually walked into the immense lobby and up to the desk. "Hello, I probably have the wrong place..." Joyce said to the man on the other side of the desk. "...but do you happen to have a reservation for 'Byers'?"

"Just one moment please." the man said with a smile. He flipped through some papers and eventually pulled one out of the pile. "Joyce Byers?" he asked.

"That's me." Joyce said, surprised.

"I have your reservation right here. Do you have any bags to be brought up to your room?"

"Just these here." Joyce said. She and Eleven raised the small bags they had in their hand to show the man. He turned around and took a key down from a hook on the wall. He handed the key to another man who walked over to the girls.

"Edward will take your bags and show you to your room." the first man said. Joyce and Eleven timidly handed their bags to the second man. He led them over to an elevator and pressed the button for the top floor. There was only door in sight when the elevator door opened. Edward unlocked the door and led them in. He set the bags down and said;

"Here is your room. If you need anything, just call." He moved his hand to show an ornate telephone on a small table. Joyce was stunned and wasn't able to say something. "I'll leave you two be. Have a nice night." Edward said.

"Wait!" called Joyce before the door closed. "Let me at least give you a tip."

"No need. Dr. Carter has already paid for everything." Joyce was once again speechless. Edward left the room.

---

Eleven sat down on one of the fancy couches while Joyce picked up the phone and started dialing.

"This must be some mistake." she said quietly to herself while the phone rang.

"Hello." came Carter's voice from the other end.

"Peter... did you book us into a 5-star penthouse in the middle of New York City?" Joyce asked, still not really believing.

"Yes." Carter said simply.

"Why?" Joyce managed to say after getting over part of the initial shock.

"Because you've been lifesavers for me this summer, you deserve it. Plus, it's El's first time in a hotel, she should have a proper experience."

"But..." Joyce struggled to say more. "Why didn't you tell us?"

"If I told you, you would have said 'it's too much money' and 'I can't let you do that for us'." Joyce wanted to argue back, but she knew he was right. "This would probably also be a good time to tell you that I also made breakfast reservations for you two at one of my favorite places in the city. It's all paid for and don't try to make me cancel it. Just enjoy yourselves." Joyce was about to say something, but Carter hung up the phone before she could.

---

Both Joyce and Eleven woke up the next morning after having a great night of sleep. The two of them had their own rooms and even their own bathrooms. They got ready fairly quickly. Joyce opened the door to the room to see an envelope on the floor that simply said 'Joyce Byers' on it. She opened it and found details for the breakfast reservation that Carter had made for them. They went to the restaurant, were seated immediately, and were given huge menus. Joyce got the best omelet she ever had while Eleven got a giant stack of waffles covered in powdered sugar. Once breakfast was done, they got back in the car and started driving back to Hawkins.

---

It was pretty late at night when they finally did arrive. The first thing that Joyce did was check on Will to make sure he was OK. She opened the door and was surprised by the state of Will's room.

"Will, are you OK?" she asked. Will woke up and rolled over to face her.

"I'm fine. Feeling a little better than yesterday." he said.

"Good." Joyce said. "What happened in here?" She looked around the room and saw everything from his desk was on the floor, a bunch of his clothes from the closet and dresser were strewn all over and his bookshelf was knocked over. Will sat up a little and looked around too.

"I honestly don't know." he said.

"It's OK." Joyce said. "I once read a story about a person that was sick. He made his room a huge mess while sleepwalking. I'm sure that's what happened here."

"Yeah." said Will, even though he wasn't quite convinced. Joyce left his room and let him sleep. She and Eleven got ready for bed, then went right to sleep because it was already 10:30.

---

Late in the night, Eleven heard her door open.

"El?" came Will's voice. Eleven slowly woke up. She looked over to the clock on her bedside table and saw it was 1:47 AM.

"What are you doing up, Will?" she asked. She looked at him. She couldn't see much with the moonlight that was streaming through her windows, but she could see the tears on his cheeks. Once she saw this, she immediately sat up and turned on her bedside lamp. "What's wrong?" she asked, concerned.

"You have to promise not to tell mom." he said, still crying a little bit.

"She could help you."

"No. You have to promise not to tell her." Eleven thought for a

moment then said;

"I promise." Will sniffled a little and tried to hold back more tears. He sat down on Eleven's bed next to her.

"I keep seeing... it." Will said.

"What?" Eleven asked, leaning closer to Will, trying to comfort him.

"What did you see?"

"Everything." he said, tears starting to flow from his eyes. "The Upside Down... the monster... everything."

## 4. Chapter 4: The Operation

Joyce woke up early and made a doctor's appointment for Will. She asked if they had any times open early in the morning, but the earliest they could take him was that afternoon. Eleven and Will thought that was a good idea. They were pretty sure that the doctor couldn't do anything about what was happening to Will. Eleven almost told Joyce what Will had told her in the night, but she didn't. She had made a promise to Will. The phone rang and Joyce picked it up. It was Jonathan. They spent the remainder of breakfast talking to him.

Will decided that he was feeling good enough to go to school. He didn't say much at breakfast and left quickly as soon as Eleven was ready. While riding their bikes, Eleven could tell that something was still wrong with Will.

"How are you feeling?" she asked him. He looked over at her a little bit.

"Fine." he said. It was another moment before Eleven said anything.

"You should at least tell Carter."

"No."

"Why not? He won't tell mom if you ask him and he might be the one person that could actually help."

"No." Will said, it sounded like he was getting a little angry. "You're the only person that I'm telling about this." Eleven was worried about Will, but she didn't say anything for the rest of the ride.

---

"Is Will OK?" Amy asked when she met up with Eleven and Mike outside the chemistry room. Eleven realized that she only promised Will that she wouldn't tell Joyce anything. She didn't say anything about Amy or Mike. She thought a little more, and decided that Will would probably still get angry if she told them.

"He's probably still just recovering from being sick." she eventually said.

---

After school, Joyce met Will at the bike racks to drive him to the doctor.

"What about my bike?" Will asked.

"I can take it." Mike offered. "I was going to go with El to work on math anyway. I can take your bike too."

"Thanks, Mike." Joyce said. She looked at her watch. "Oh. We need to get going." She started walking over to the car and Will somewhat reluctantly went with.

Mike opened the lock for his bike, then for Will's bike. He figured out that it would be kind of impossible for him to take both bikes while riding one of them, so he just decided to walk. Eleven was happy to walk with him. They got a good distance away from the school in silence. They didn't always have to be talking about something, they were generally happy just to be with each other. Mike knew this, but he still felt a little awkward not talking about anything.

"So..." he started, trying to think of a topic. "How's Jonathan?"

"Good." Eleven said. "He called this morning while we were eating breakfast. School starts today. I think his first class is economics. He was really excited about it. He met his roommate. Apparently his name is Nick and he's a really nice guy."

"Good."

"How's Nancy?"

"She's good as far as I know. She hasn't called yet, but my parents were with her and helped her move in. She's in a room with two other people. My mom said they were both nice but my dad said one of them is too chatty." Eleven laughed a little bit.

"I hope she has a good time there."

"I hope Jonathan has a good time at NYU. I know he's always wanted to go there."

"Yeah." Eleven said. The conversation died out a little after that, so Mike decided it was a good time to change the subject.

"Are you sure Will's OK?" Eleven didn't say anything for a little while, Mike could tell she was thinking.

"No." she said.

"What?" Mike became immediately concerned for Will. "What's wrong?"

"I promised I wouldn't tell anyone. But I'm worried about him." Eleven looked scared. Not the kind of scared you feel when someone is just sick.

"Well... the doctor will figure out what's wrong with him." Mike said, trying to reassure Eleven a little.

"No." Eleven said. Her eyes fixed on the ground.

"What do you mean 'no'?"

"I promised I wouldn't tell." They went the rest of the way in silence.

---

Once the two got to Eleven's house, they went to her room and started working on their math homework. After working a little while, their minds turned to other things and the mood lightened a little bit. They eventually got bored of math and just sat together in the big chair Eleven had in the corner of her room.

"Last weekend, while you guys were away in New York, I swore I heard your voice one time while I was getting ready." Mike said, looking into Eleven's pretty brown eyes. She smiled and brushed her hair out of her face. It had gotten long in the two years since she had met Mike in the forest.

"That's funny." she said. "I fell asleep in the car and dreamed about you getting ready." Both of them laughed a little bit before falling



into a deep kiss. The mood was ruined a couple of seconds later.

"Hello! El! Are you there? Over." came Dustin's voice from over by Eleven's desk. She and Mike looked over to see the Super-Comm that Mike had given her the previous Christmas. She walked quickly over and picked it up.

"I'm here. Mike is too." she said. "What do you want? Over."

"Amy randomly showed up at my house and demanded that I get you guys to come over. Over."

"We're kind of busy at the moment. Over."

"With what? Kissing? Over." Dustin said sarcastically. Eleven could hear the start of a laugh before the radio went silent again.

"Yes." Eleven said, not thinking much of it. "We're doing math too. Over." She looked over to Mike who was still sitting on the chair. His eyes were wide and he was speechless.

"Just please come over." came Amy's voice over the radio. They could hear Dustin in the background laughing really hard. Eleven looked over to Mike. He made a small motion to indicate that he was OK with it.

"OK. We're on our way. Over."

---

Twenty minutes later, Mike and Eleven showed up at Dustin's house. Once they got to the basement, they found that Amy had assembled the whole group, except for Will of course.

"This better be good." Mike said as he sat down on the couch. Eleven sat right next to him and Dustin snorted a little bit trying to hold back a laugh when she did. Amy shot Dustin an angry look, then started talking.

"Don't worry, Mike. It is really good. After school today... I saw Miss Maple get into Carter's car... and they drove off together." The room was silent for a moment.

"And?" said Lucas.

"That's it." said Amy.

"You got all of us to come over here for that?" asked Sarah, a little annoyed.

"No." said Amy. "I got all of you to come over here to discuss what we're going to do about it."

"Nothing." said Lucy. "We're going to do nothing about it."

"Why not?" asked a disappointed Amy. "Are none of you at least a little bit curious?" Everyone thought for a little bit.

"No." said Dustin. "But would it shut you up if we 'investigated' and proved that nothing's happening?"

"No." said Amy. "But you could try." Everyone in the room eventually reluctantly agreed to 'investigate' Carter and Miss Maple's relationship. Amy got giddy with excitement and everyone else just seemed a little annoyed.

Everyone decided to leave the planning of the 'investigation' to Amy. She got started right away while everyone else left. Except for Dustin, whose house they were at. He tried (and failed) to get Amy to leave. Mike went back to his own house instead of going back with Eleven.

---

When Eleven got back, she started working on her homework again. She heard the front door open and ran out to see what it was. Joyce had returned with Will.

"What did the doctor say?" Eleven asked.

"Not much." said Joyce. "He said that he didn't exactly know what was wrong and sent us home with some Tylenol." Joyce held up a white and red bottle to show Eleven.

"He didn't say anything else?" Eleven asked.

"No. He ran a couple of tests and said that as far as he could tell it

was nothing serious though." Eleven looked over to Will. As soon as he saw her looking at him, he broke eye contact.

"OK. Good to hear." Eleven said, even though she wasn't convinced of that.

---

In the middle of October, Amy showed up at the lunch table and began passing papers out to everyone.

"What is this?" asked Lucas.

"Our investigation." said a very excited Amy. "I've been watching Carter's car every day after school for the past month. They go together on Monday every two weeks. I was able to find out that he always drives to his house after that, but I thought you guys should be a part of the next step." Everyone was silent for a little bit while they looked over the papers that they all had. They described specific roles that each person would have during their 'operation'.

"You're taking this way too seriously." Sarah said.

"Yes I am. Thank you." Amy said proudly.

"OK." Dustin said. "I admit, there's something there and I kind of want to know what it is."

"See!" exclaimed Amy. "I knew that you guys would get just as excited as me!"

"I wouldn't go that far." Dustin said.

"Well... it's a step in the right direction." Amy said.

---

The next Monday, the whole group met up at lunch to make their final plans. Lucas got out his backpack and started pulling some stuff out. Lucas had brought some binoculars, each of the boys and Eleven brought their Super-Comms, and Amy brought a surprise.

"What did you bring?" Dustin asked. "Just tell us."

"Just give me a moment." Amy said while digging around in her backpack. Dustin got annoyed at how long she was taking and leaned back with a huff. "Ah-ha!" Amy exclaimed. "Here it is." She pulled a nice camera with a huge lens out of her bag and set it on the table.

"Where did you get that?" Will asked in disbelief. "I know how much one of those costs. You can not afford it."

"Calm down." Amy said. "The camera's mine but the lens is my dad's. I'm sure he won't mind if I borrow it."

"You didn't ask permission?" Lucy asked.

"No. He's out of town for the week. He won't notice." Amy said, most of the group was surprised how calm she was staying.

"How are you even going to develop the pictures?" Will asked.

"I've had the camera for a while. They've been letting me use the darkroom at the high school for as long as I've had it." Amy said. "Anyway, Carter's house has a bunch of big windows and bushes all around it. It's like the place was designed to be spied on."

---

Once the final bell rang, Amy and Lucas went to Carter's house as fast as they could. They had the binoculars and camera, so they needed to find a good place to hide before Carter and Miss Maple got there. Mike and Eleven stayed by the bike racks where they could get a good view of Carter's car.

"Are they there yet?" came Amy's voice over the radio.

"Not yet." Mike said. "And you have to say 'over' when you're done. Over."

"Fine. Let me know when they are." Amy said back, a little annoyed. "Over." she added quickly.

"What do you think we've been doing this whole time? Over." Mike asked.

"I don't know. I thought maybe kissing." Amy teased. "Over." Mike

buried his face in his hands. Eleven smiled and moved to comfort him a little bit. She was so concentrated on Mike that she almost didn't see Carter and Miss Maple walk out of the school. She tapped Mike on the shoulder and pointed over to them.

"They just got out of the building. Over." Mike quickly said. The two teachers walked over to Carter's blue car together and got in. "They just got in the car. I have to say I was half expecting them not to. Over."

"See. You guys should really trust me more." Amy said. There was a long pause. "Oh, over." Amy said after she realized she had forgotten.

Will and Dustin were hidden at two separate points along the car's route. They each called in over the radio once they saw it and Amy called once she saw them pull into Carter's driveway.

"What are we supposed to do now? Over." asked Mike.

"I don't know." Amy said, sounding a little annoyed that he was interrupting her during her part of the operation. "Come here and watch. Go home. It doesn't matter to me. Just don't let them notice you. Over." Mike looked over at Eleven and they decided together that it would be best if they just went home.

---

The next morning, Eleven went with Will to math class like she always did. Lucy was there like normal, but an excited Amy was also there with a big folder.

"I got here super early to develop these." Amy said, giving the folder to Eleven. "All I can say at this point is that I was right." Eleven opened the folder and started flipping through the pictures while Lucy and Will looked over her shoulders. The first picture was just the two of them sitting at Carter's kitchen table with some books while talking.

"This one isn't really incriminating evidence." Will said. "They could just be talking about school for all we know."

"Keep looking." Amy said, excitement growing in her voice. Eleven

flipped through the next couple of pictures. There were a couple of them both talking to Tim when he got home from school, some of them preparing and then eating dinner, then the one that Amy seemed most interested in. It was a picture of Carter and Miss Maple sitting on a couch together. Carter's arm was around Miss Maple's shoulder and they each were smiling while looking into each other's eyes.

"OK." said Lucy, very surprised. "You were right."

"That's all I wanted to hear." said Amy with a never-ending smile. She snatched the folder back from Eleven.

"Maybe get off your high-horse a little bit." Will said. "It's not that important."

"You only don't think it's important because I was right and you weren't." Eleven rolled her eyes a little bit. She had seen Amy get too proud before and knew it would be a little while before she was back to normal.

---

Nobody in the group could wait until their meeting after chemistry class. When the bell finally rang, the rest of the class left and Carter locked the door.

"You guys seem a little anxious." Carter said while walking over to the group. They didn't say anything, Amy simply set her folder down on the table. He picked up and flipped through the pictures. Everyone was surprised how good of a poker face he maintained while doing so.

"Amy... you did this?" he eventually asked.

"Yes." Amy said, a little more timid and less excited than she was before. Carter took another moment to look through all the pictures again.

"Well... all I can say is that you would make a good secret agent."

"Really?" Amy asked. Her excitement returning.

"Yes."

"So..." Sarah said. "Are you dating Miss Maple."

"Yes." Carter said. "We've been together since late August."

"HA!" Amy yelled at the group. "I was right!"

"Apparently you were." said Carter. "It's going really well. I know that Elizabeth and I would appreciate it if you didn't tell anybody else."

"Elizabeth?" asked Will who was only half paying attention.

"Miss Maple." Eleven clarified.

"So..." Lucas started. "...have you told her that... you're... like... you know... a spy?"

"No. I honestly hope that I never have to."

"Why not?" asked Dustin.

"Because the only situation in which I would tell her is one where it is important to her safety. I hope a situation like that never arises." The girls said that hoped that Carter was happy and wished the couple all the best while the boys didn't really say much.

After a couple of minutes, Will suddenly ran towards the door. He tried to open it, but it was locked.

"Carter, open the door." he said quickly.

"Why?" asked Dustin. You just used the bathroom before we got here. You can hold it a couple more minutes.

"It's not that." Will wanted to say more, but he started gagging and it was like he was about to throw up. He did, but not like everyone was expecting. A big dark green blob flew out of Will's mouth in a ball of slime. It started wriggling around when it hit the floor. Everyone quickly took at least one step away from the slug-like thing except for Carter. He quickly grabbed a jar from his desk and scooped the blob inside before quickly closing it. Everyone looked back at Will. He

stumbled back and gasped in terror for a moment before collapsing to the floor and curling up in a ball.

Carter put the jar on the table and walked over to a crying Will.

"It's OK." he said, trying to comfort the boy. Will calmed down a little bit in a couple of minutes and Carter offered him his big office chair.

"Thank you." Will said weakly, sitting down.

"How long has this been happening?" Carter asked, indicating the jar on the table.

"Ever since I got back from the Upside Down." Will said. "When you got Eleven back a month later, you said the Upside Down collapsed and there were none of... those... for a while." Will also indicated the jar on the table. "I thought it was fine. But in the past two months or so... it's been happening again." Will took another moment to compose himself. He looked over to Eleven and she gave him a small nod to indicate that she thought it would be a good idea for him to say everything. "Last month... when I was sick on the weekend... I woke up in the middle of the night and saw the Upside Down... all around me. I saw it again just now. And... and..."

"And what?" Carter asked. "I want to help but you have to tell me everything."

"And I saw the monster." Will said, his breathing becoming irregular and rushed.

"I thought El killed the monster." Mike said.

"To be honest, I thought so too." said Carter. "But The Coalition never investigated it because we didn't think it would be a problem."

---

A/N: I know where the major plot-line of the story is going, but if anyone has ideas for some small subplots to embellish it, please let me know. This chapter has a lot of really small parts to advance the story a little bit. Let me know what you think of that as compared to what I did in previous chapters where I had big sections and a lot of description to move the story along. As always, please review and



thanks for reading.

## 5. Chapter 5: The Prisoner

Carter was distraught when he got home. He felt scared for Will and everything that was happening to him. He didn't know what to do. In the past, he would have simply gone into his office to think about it, or gone to sleep and think about it more in the morning. But he couldn't do that now. Tim came home from school about fifteen minutes after Carter got home.

"Hi, Dad!" Tim said as he walked into the big kitchen and saw Carter sitting at the table. Carter was scared by what had happened in school that day, but he wasn't about to scare Tim too. He put on his most convincing smile and said;

"How was school today, buddy?"

"Good." Tim said. He went through a summary of his entire day while Carter made him a grilled cheese sandwich. Tim eagerly ate it. "Thanks for the food." he said when he was done. "I have some homework to do. Bye." Tim said as he went up the stairs to his room.

Once he was gone, Carter sat back down and thought some more. He couldn't think clearly though. In the past, he would try to ignore that fact and just continue. But this time, he knew exactly what he needed. He picked up the phone off the kitchen wall and dialed a number he knew by heart at this point. It rang three times before it got picked up.

"Hello." came the voice on the other end.

"Hi, Elizabeth. It's Peter." Carter said.

"Peter! Is something wrong?"

"No." Carter said quickly, but then he thought for a moment. "Actually... yes. How could you tell?"

"We talk a lot. I can hear when there's something different in your voice." Carter smiled a little at how much she could tell about him.

"Could you come over?" he asked.

"Yeah. I'll be there in ten. See you soon."

"Bye."

"Bye." Carter looked up at the clock on the wall. 4:17.

---

A little bit later, he heard a car pull into the driveway and looked back at the clock. 4:25. He opened the front door and saw Elizabeth getting out of her little gray Honda Civic.

"Liar." Carter said with a smile. "It only took you 8 minutes." Elizabeth smiled back at him and laughed a little. They went inside and sat down on the couch. "So..." said Elizabeth. "What's wrong?"

"I can't say." Carter said. "I really shouldn't say." Elizabeth began to look worried for him and put a hand on his arm. "I don't know why I called you here. You probably have work to do."

"No." Elizabeth said. "To be honest, I've planned all my lessons through Thanksgiving already and the kids don't care if they have to wait another day to get their tests back. I'm here for you. If you want to talk, or just want to sit with me." Carter turned to her and simply smiled. He thought that would be the best way of communicating what he was feeling in that moment.

They just sat and talked about how their day went for a while (but Carter didn't mention anything that was happening to Will). Tim came downstairs when he was done with his homework. Carter and Elizabeth made dinner together while Tim watched some cartoons. They liked cooking together. It was a nice sense of teamwork and they felt that they were doing something useful with their time.

After dinner, Tim went to bed and Carter and Elizabeth watched a movie. When the credits started to roll, Carter turned off the TV.

"It's probably time for you to head home." Carter said, a little disappointed by his own words.

"Yes. It probably is." Elizabeth said. "But what if I didn't?"

"What do you mean by that?" Carter was a little confused.

"Well... what if I spent the night here?" Elizabeth asked. She was obviously a little uncomfortable making the proposal. Carter thought for a moment, then smiled.

"That would be nice."

They both went up to the master bedroom and about ten minutes later, they were both in Carter's king sized bed. He was just about to turn the lights off, but then he thought for a moment.

"Do you ever think we're moving too?" he asked. "Like... the two of us... together?"

"Do you?" Elizabeth asked. Carter thought for a moment. Being a secret agent didn't leave much room for a romantic life, but he did have three girlfriends in high school and college. He thought back to how he felt in those relationships, and how he felt with Elizabeth. He realized how different things felt this time. How good he felt about all of it.

"No." he eventually said. "I thought I would feel like we're going too fast, or doing too much but everything just feels... right."

"My thoughts exactly." Elizabeth said. "Good night, Peter."

"Good night, Elizabeth." Carter turned the lights out and smiled as he tried to get to sleep.

---

"I don't know what's wrong with Will, but I promise that I will not stop looking until I do." Carter said to the group after chemistry class the next day. He felt more energized that day, he felt more ready to work and help.

"Have you started looking?" asked Eleven.

"Sort of. I have a bunch of people at The Coalition looking for leads. I gave them the... slug... thing..." Carter struggled to say, trying to think of a better way to describe the thing that came out of Will the previous day. "...and they're doing research on it." Everyone was stunned by Carter's confidence. The next thing than anyone heard was a knock at the door. Carter grabbed his keys and rushed to

unlock it. When he opened it, he saw Elizabeth standing on the other side.

"Hi." she said a little awkwardly. "Are you in the middle of something?" she asked when she saw all the kids in the room.

"Sort of. What's up?" Carter asked.

"Can I borrow your car? I left some stuff at home and my car is... yeah."

"Sure." Carter said, he took a big black key off his key chain. "Can you drive stick?" he asked before handing it to her.

"Yeah. Been doing it since high school."

"OK. Good." He handed Elizabeth the key and said goodbye as she left.

There was a long silence in the room before Amy started talking;

"Why did she need to borrow your car?" she asked. Carter tried to think of a lie, but he eventually just ended up saying;

"Because her car is at my house."

"Oooh." Amy squealed while mos of the other kids just smiled. "I just thought her car was in the shop or something."

"You know... that's what I should have said." Eleven looked over and saw that even Will was smiling.

"You look happy." she said to him.

"Yeah." Will said, still smiling. "I know that there's something wrong with me, but that's not all that I am." A small weight lifted off of Eleven's chest when he said this.

---

"It's been a week, Carter." Mike said the next Monday. "Do you have any leads on what's wrong with Will?" Carter sighed.

"Yes. I have one." he said. "We found one lead pretty early on but I didn't to believe that it's the only one even though now that's what it looks like."

"What is it?" asked Eleven, desperate for anything that would help her brother.

"You're not going to like it." said Carter.

"I don't care. What is it?" asked Eleven.

"Ten." he said. The atmosphere in the room got tense. Everyone there had something against Ten and none of them wanted to deal with her again.

"What did she say?" Eleven asked.

"She said that she knew what the slug thing is but she said she'd only talk to you." Carter said. "You don't have to talk to her if you don't want to. We can find some other way."

"No." insisted Eleven. "We need to figure this out as soon as possible."

---

Eleven returned to the chemistry room right after school was done. She also saw that Miss Maple was also there.

"El!" Carter exclaimed when he saw her in the doorway. "Before we head out on our 'field trip' we have to drive Eliz... Miss Maple somewhere." Eleven smiled a little bit. She knew that they had to drive to Carter's house so Miss Maple could get her car.

"OK." She said.

The car was silent when Miss Maple was with them. Carter drove to his house and Eleven noticed that Miss Maple's cheeks were a little bit red when she got out.

"Thank you, Dr. Carter." she said, trying her best to sound professional.

"Glad I could help." he said. Eleven moved up to the front seat and

Carter drove away. Neither of them said anything until they were on the highway.

"So..." Eleven said. "Miss Maple spent the night at your house?"

"Ahh... yes." said Carter.

"Was it nice?"

"Yes." The car was then silent for the rest of the trip.

---

Carter got off the highway in Indianapolis and went to an underground parking garage that Eleven had already been to a couple of times. They went to the elevator in the corner of the bottom level of the garage, pressed the secret button to go down, and the doors opened on The Coalition's Indianapolis base. Eleven noticed one thing that was different since her last visit. There was a big sign above the reception desk that said; 'The Coalition'. That wasn't different, she remembered it from all of her previous visits. But there was a smaller sign under it that said; 'Agent Jeffery Freely Memorial Base'. Agent Freely had given his life to save Eleven the previous year. Eleven and her friends knew him as a hero, but because he worked in secret, there were no newspaper articles about him, no public memorials, no nothing. Eleven was glad that The Coalition found some way to honor him.

A man in a suit came over to them.

"Hello, I'm Agent Matthews. You might remember me from your last visit." he said to Eleven. She did some quick mental searching and remembered that she did remember him from the last time she was there. After Freely died and Ten had been arrested, Ten called her in for a short conversation and Agent Matthews helped her while she was there.

"I do remember you." she said.

"Good. I run the base now ever since Freely... yeah." He didn't really want to go into detail about what happened to Freely, he was his friend.

"The interrogation room?" asked Carter from the side, trying to move the visit along because he knew that Eleven didn't want to be there. Matthews snapped out of his thoughts.

"The interrogation room! Yes." he said. He turned around and indicated for Eleven and Carter to follow him.

After a couple minutes of going through confusing hallways and security doors, they made it to their destination. A man was standing there and gave Carter the jar with the slug thing in it. Eleven looked through the glass at the person she considered to be her worst enemy. Ten was lounging in the cold metal chair while reading a magazine. Eleven paid special attention to the collar that she had around her neck that was blocking her powers. Matthews saw this.

"We haven't had any issues with her." he said. "The collar is doing its job." He was trying to make Eleven a little more comfortable about going in the room, but Ten's powers weren't what she was uncomfortable about.

The door to the small room buzzed open. Ten looked up at the door as it opened. She put on a big maniacal smile when she saw Eleven, but it faded a little bit when she saw Carter come in too.

"I was wondering when you were going to come pay me a visit." Ten said, the crazy smile still there. Eleven didn't say anything. She just sat slowly down in the chair opposite Ten while Carter stood close behind her. Ten went back to reading her magazine when neither of them said anything for a while.

"Let's get straight to the point." Carter said. He held up the jar. "Do you know what this is?" Ten looked up for a moment, but didn't seem too interested so she went back to flipping through her magazine.

"Of course I know what that is, I work for The Legion." Eleven and Carter exchanged glances for a moment, trying to figure out what she was talking about. Ten noticed that they hadn't said anything for a while, so she looked up from her magazine. She threw the magazine off to the side of the room, smiled, and started laughing. "You guys have never heard of The Legion have you?" More silence from Carter and Eleven. "Oh my God!" Ten laughed. "How long has it been since



you arrested me? Seven months or something? And you've done nothing! You really must be the worst secret agents in the world if you haven't even found out some of the basics." Ten continued to laugh.

"What's The Legion?" Carter asked, remaining calm and collected.

"What?" Ten asked. "You think I'm just going to tell you?" Eleven got impatient.

"What's wrong with Will?" she asked angrily.

"Who's Will?" asked Ten, recovering a bit from all the laughing. "Will Byers? The kid that got stuck in 'the Upside Down'?"

"Yes." said Carter.

"I always thought 'the Upside Down' was a good name for it. 'The Demogorgon' was also a good name for that thing in there, sounds creepy. You guys did a good job with that." Ten said.

"Don't avoid the question." said Eleven, gritting her teeth a little.

"OK, jeez. Keep your cool." Ten said. "What happened to the kid?"

"That." said Eleven, pointing to the jar in Carter's hand. "He threw up and that came out."

"Anything else?" Ten asked. Eleven didn't want to say anything, so Carter did instead.

"He said that he's been throwing these things up for a while now." Carter held up the jar again. "And whenever he does, the Upside Down appears around him for a moment."

"There should be something else too." said Ten, leaning in with small creepy smile on her face.

"He told me that one time he saw the Demogorgon." Eleven said.

"That's it." Ten said, leaning back. "That's what I was waiting for you to say."

"What's wrong with him?" Eleven asked again.

"I can't say for certain, but you might want to ask little Will Byers where he saw the Demogorgon." Ten said while looking Eleven straight in the eye.

---

Eleven simply stared out the window on the ride home.

"Are you OK?" Carter asked.

"Yeah. I'm fine." Eleven said, not very convincingly.

"I know you hate her. I know you don't ever want to see her again, hopefully you won't have to again."

"I'm just thinking what she said about 'ask Will where he saw the Demogorgon'. What do you think she meant by that?"

"I honestly don't know. I know that he saw the monster while he was sick and home alone, so based on almost nothing, I think it's just post traumatic stress. He's throwing up slugs, seeing the Upside Down, I think he's just under a lot of stress and flashes of the monster are coming back to him."

"Yeah, but there was something else about that night that I can't remember."

"What?"

"I can't remember."

"Sorry."

"It's OK. Just give me a minute to think about it." Carter stayed quiet and Eleven continued to look out the window at the landscape and passing cars. "I know!" she exclaimed about twenty minutes later.

"What?" asked Carter, a little startled by how suddenly Eleven spoke.

"His room was a mess."

"So? He's a teenage boy."

"No. It wasn't just a mess. Everything was all over, the bookshelf was on the floor. It looked like a tornado went through the room."

"That's interesting." Carter said.

"Do you know what it means?"

"No idea."

---

After Eleven and Carter left, two guards came into the interrogation room to bring Ten back to her cell. They put cuffs around her hands and feet, then unlocked the longer cuffs that had held her to the table while she was talking to Eleven. The guards pulled her to her feet.

"Can I at least have my magazine?" Ten asked. The guards looked at each other. One of them shrugged as if to say 'why not'. The second guard picked up the magazine from the floor and handed it to Ten. "Thank you." Ten said politely.

They were buzzed out of the interrogation room and started walking down the hallways to Ten's cell. They got to the cell door and one of the guards went over to the keypad on the wall to open it.

"You guys know this thing around my neck?" Ten asked. Neither of the guards said anything. "It blocks my powers. I can't do anything with my mind." The guards still said nothing. "But my legs... that's another story." Ten dropped to the floor and spun around, sweeping the legs of one of the guards while she did. The guard dropped to the floor and Ten sprung to her knees, one knee over the guard's neck. "Neither of you are going to do anything if you want to live." Ten announced. "I happen to know that we're in a security camera blind spot right now. First, unlock the cuffs. Now!" she yelled. The second guard slowly obliged. "Thank you. Now, give me your clothes." The guard wasn't sure what to do, but he eventually gave Ten his clothes to keep her from killing the other guard. She put them on and she looked just like a normal security guard, complete with the gray cotton hat that they all wore all the time. The shirt even covered the collar blocking her from using her powers. "You two have really been

so kind." Ten said with a smile. "But I think we all know I was lying when I said I wouldn't kill you."

---

"Going home early, Dave?" the woman at the front desk asked. It took Ten a moment to realize the woman was talking to her. She made her voice as low as she could and said;

"Yeah. I don't feel so well." She kept her hat low so the woman couldn't see her face.

"That's probably a good idea. You don't sound very good." the woman said back. "Get well soon."

"Thanks." Ten said before getting into the elevator. The woman at the desk looked up again and said;

"You've got something on your shoe." Ten looked down at her shoe to see a smear of one of the guards' blood on it. "You're going to want to wash that before tomorrow. You know how strict Matthews is about those things."

"Yeah, thanks." Ten said. The last thing she saw before the doors closed was a young agent run over to the desk and yell;

"Two dead guards in the cell block."

---

Eleven and Carter were almost all the way back to Hawkins when they heard a beeping in the car.

"What's that?" Eleven asked.

"There's a big Coalition radio in the glove box. Can you get it out?" She opened the glove compartment and pulled out a big black blocky radio. She was expecting something similar to her Super-Comm, but this was much bigger and more serious. Carter pulled a small piece on a cord off of the main assembly. He pressed the button on the side and said;

"This is Agent Carter. What's the situation?" There was static for a couple of seconds before the radio came back to life and said;

"IND Code Red 23D." Carter flicked the steering wheel to the left and went through an 'AUTHORIZED VEHICLES ONLY' passage in the middle of the highway to get to the other side of the road. He dropped the car into third gear and flipped a secret switch under the steering wheel to turn on the lights and siren.

"What does 'IND Code Red 23D' mean?" asked a very surprised Eleven.

"IND means the base in Indianapolis. Code Red 23D means prisoner escape." Carter very plainly said while shifting into fourth and accelerating as hard as he could.

---

They were back at the base in record time. Carter practically ran out of the elevator when it reached its destination.

"What happened?" he asked the woman at the desk.

"Two security guards are dead back in the cell block. Agent Matthews is in the security office reviewing the CCTV feed." the woman responded. Carter took a moment to think.

"Can I use your phone?" he eventually asked, indicating the phone on the desk.

"I have to keep this line open while we're in this state of emergency, but you can go ask around in the office. Someone will let you use their phone." Carter waved to Eleven to tell her to come with him. The first person that Carter asked gladly let him use their phone. He quickly dialed a number. A couple of rings later, he was connected.

"Hi, honey." he said in a surprisingly calm voice. Eleven assumed he was talking to Miss Maple. "The field trip was good. I'm at a rest stop on the highway right now, traffic is really backed up and I have no idea when I'm going to get home. Could you go over to my house and check on Tim? Thanks." He hung up the phone and turned to the agent next to him. "Can you please have someone back up traffic on the highway?"

"What? Why?" the agent asked who was very confused.

"So I didn't just completely lie to my girlfriend."

"That is against so many policies."

"After everything I've given to this organization? Can't you do this one thing for me?" The agent thought to himself for a moment.

"I'll see what I can do." The agent left to go talk to some other agents. Carter picked up the phone again and offered it to Eleven.

"You should probably call Joyce and tell her where you are." Eleven called her and told her as much about the situation as she could without telling her anything about Will.

---

Eleven and Carter got back late at night. Carter walked quietly into his house to find Elizabeth on the couch reading a book.

"Tim's in bed already." she said. "I was listening to the radio a while ago and happened to hear the traffic report. That backed up highway sounded bad. I'm honestly surprised you're back so soon."

"Yeah, it was pretty annoying." Carter said. He laughed awkwardly. "Listen, thanks for everything. It really means a lot to me."

"I'm simply to help out. I do it all because I love you." Elizabeth said. Carter realized this was the first time that she had told him that she loved him.

"I love you too." Carter said with a soft and warm smile. Elizabeth stayed at Carter's house again that night.

---

"What did you find out?" asked Will the next day after chemistry class.

"We didn't get much from Ten." Eleven said.

"Maybe she'll say more later." Will said. Eleven and Carter traded glances. "What?" Will asked. "Is something wrong?"

"Code Red 23D." Eleven said.

"What does that mean?" asked Mike.

"Prisoner escape." said Carter. Everyone's hearts dropped a little bit when they heard the news.

"So... Ten is back... out there?" asked Mike.

"I'm afraid so." said Carter with a solemn voice.

"Well... what did she say?" Will asked. Carter looked over to Eleven. He could tell that she didn't want to say anything so he did instead.

"Remember you told us one time that you saw the Demogorgon?" asked Carter.

"Yeah." said Will.

"She told us to 'ask you where you saw it'." A tear rolled down from Will's eye when heard this. Then another from the other eye, then he sunk down into the chair behind him and buried his face in his hands.

"What's wrong, Will?" Eleven asked, rushing over to him. "Where did you see it?" Will looked up. His face was now red.

"In the mirror."

## 6. Chapter 6: The Phone Call

Halloween came at the end of the month. Nobody in the group wanted to go trick-or-treating. One reason was that they all thought they were too old for it, but the main reason was that they were attacked by Ten the previous year in the forest. Everyone was a little scared that she was on the loose again, so they all decided to just meet up at Mike's house to watch scary movies and eat candy.

"Hey guys!" Lucas said half way through their second movie. Nobody was really paying too much attention to the screen, so they didn't mind being interrupted by Lucas. "It's been one year since we all found out that Mike and Eleven were dating."

"Oh, yeah." Dustin said. "It was."

"You're not going to say any more, Dustin?" Mike asked. "I would have expected you to spend a couple minutes teasing us." Mike said, teasing Dustin a little while doing so.

"Yeah, well..." Dustin said in lieu of actually forming a coherent sentence. Nobody said anything for a while, so they just went back to watch the movie.

A really tense suspenseful scene came up a couple minutes later that got everyone's attention. The main character was walking slowly down a dark hall while some scary music played. Everyone jumped and some of the group squealed a little bit when the phone rang in the kitchen. Everyone let out a little sigh and laughed together when they realized it wasn't actually anything scary. Karen was out trick-or-treating with Holly, so Ted went and took the ringing phone off the wall.

"Hello." he said. He listened for a moment, looked over to the group, then said; "Yeah, she's here... sure." He lowered the phone and called; "Elle. There's someone on the phone for you." Eleven got up and walked over to the kitchen while Mike pressed the pause button on the VCR. Ted handed Eleven the handset, then went back into the dining room where he was reading a book.



Eleven, just like the rest of the group, had absolutely no idea who could be calling. She curiously lifted the handset to her ear and said;

"Hello?"

"Hello, Eleven." came the voice of the last person Eleven wanted to talk to.

"Ten." she said angrily, her free hand clenching into a fist. The rest of the group, still sitting in the living room gasped. Most of them didn't know what to do. Mike stood up and started pacing around to dissipate some energy that was rising in him. "What do you want?"

"Don't worry. I won't be showing up and throwing rocks at you and your friends again this year. I'm a little too far away for that."

"Did you just call to chat or do you have a point?"

"Yes, I do. I know we have our differences, but we have some common interests."

"Like what?"

"Like Will Byers." Eleven looked over at Will in the living room at the mention of her brother.

"What do you want with him?"

"Honestly, I want him to be safe and sound."

"Likely story."

"It's true. By now you probably know about his... monstrous side. I just wanted to tell you that you might want to look into your old home a little bit."

"What does that mean?"

"You figure it out. I'm out of time. Got to go. Bye." Ten quickly hung up the phone. It took Eleven a little time to get over the shock of the call before she hung up her end. Eleven slowly made her way back to the group and stood, speechless, in front of the TV.

"We have to go to Carter." she eventually said.

---

It didn't take everyone long to get ready. It was a little bit cold outside, so they put on some jackets, then started heading out the door.

"What are you guys doing?" Ted asked. Mike turned around to face his father who he had completely forgotten was there.

"We're going out." Mike said after being rushed to come up with an excuse to leave the house at 9:00 PM on Halloween.

"Where?" Ted asked.

"Just around." said Sarah, coming up from behind Mike. "We didn't want to stay in the house all night, we thought a bike ride would be nice." Ted nodded a little bit. He was always trying to get Mike to do some more sports, so he was satisfied.

"OK. Have fun, just don't be out too late." He turned around to go back to reading his book. Once he was gone, Mike turned to Sarah.

"Thanks for that one."

"No problem." Sarah said. The group ran out the door and got all of their bikes from where they stood next to Mike's house.

The streets were full with kids out getting candy. On most other days, they would have taken a shortcut through the forest to avoid all the people and get their faster. However, considering what happened to them the previous Halloween, the group thought it would be best to stay in public view.

It took them about twenty minutes to get to Carter's house on the other end of the neighborhood, a couple minutes longer than it would have taken if they took the shortcuts, but nobody complained. Mike and Eleven were the first ones to drop their bikes and run up to the door. They frantically rang the doorbell, but got no result. Mike backed up to look at the house and noticed that all the windows were dark.

"Where could he be?" asked Mike, a little frustrated.

"Uh... guys." called Dustin, a little far back on the walkway up to the house. He was pointing at a small table with a bowl on it that neither Mike nor Eleven had noticed in their rush. They went back, saw the bowl was full of candy, then read the sign on the bowl: 'We're out trick-or-treating. Please take one piece of candy.'. "I guess he's out trick-or-treating with Tim." Dustin said while picking a piece of candy out of the bowl and immediately eating it.

"What should we do?" asked Lucas. Mike looked at his watch. It was almost 9:30.

"He'll be back soon, we have school tomorrow and Tim will have to go to bed." Mike said. He walked back to the door, and sat down on one of the concrete steps in front of it. Eleven sat down right next to him, then the rest of the group followed suit. Except for Dustin who took another piece of candy.

"The sign says to just take one!" yelled Lucas from the porch.

"I'm under stress! I can't help myself." Dustin yelled back, even though everyone knew that was a lie.

---

It was only about ten minutes before the group heard Carter's voice coming from down the street. They all stood up and started walking to the front of the lawn to go meet him. The first thing they saw was Tim in a Spider-Man costume. Then they saw Carter dressed as a vampire holding hands with Miss Maple dressed as a witch. As soon as they saw the group of kids in front of Carter's house, they awkwardly stopped holding hands and took a step apart.

"Well... that was nice meeting you... randomly... here... tonight." Miss Maple said, stuttering as she tried to come up with some story for being out with Carter late at night.

"Nice seeing you here too, Miss Maple." Carter said, playing along. They awkwardly shook hands, then Miss Maple got in her car (which was parked in Carter's driveway) and drove quickly off. Carter turned to the group of kids.

"I'm assuming this is something important." he said.

"Very." Mike said.

"OK then." Carter said. He walked through the group of kids and unlocked the door.

---

Once they all got inside, Tim went up the stairs to bed and Carter made everyone some hot chocolate. Everyone milled around a little bit while Carter was working in the kitchen.

"Why was Miss Maple acting so awkward back there?" Amy asked. "Does she not know that we know that you're dating?"

"No." Carter said, picking up a tray of full mugs. "She's trying to keep it quiet around the school for now. You know how middle school students can be with their gossip and whatnot."

"Yeah, I suppose I get that." Amy said. She walked next to Carter as he brought the mugs into the living room. "But you should know that we're happy for you two."

"Thank you, Amy."

The group all found spots on the seats in the living room. Mike looked around, impressed at the cavernous living room. He had never been to Carter's house before. He knew that The Coalition paid for one of the only houses for sale in Hawkins the previous year, but Mike was amazed they had bought such a big one. Carter settled into the big leather chair at the opposite side of the room and took a sip of his hot chocolate.

"Now then... what did you guys want to talk to me about?" Most of the people in the room exchanged glances. Some of them were angry, some scared, and some just plain confused.

"I got a phone call." Eleven said. "From Ten." Carter sat up in his chair a little bit. He set his mug down on the small table next to the chair and leaned in towards Eleven.

"What did she say?" he asked. Eleven closed her eyes and tried to

remember what her nemesis had said over the phone.

"She said that she's far away from Hawkins..." Eleven thought more. "...and that we should look at 'my old home' to find something about Will." Eleven put down her mug too. "She also said something about 'Will's monstrous side'." she added. Carter stood up and started to walk around the room while he thought.

"Your old home' must be the Hawkins lab." he said. "I remember getting some strange seismic reading from the general direction of the lab a little while ago, but I didn't think much of it at the time." He walked around a little more while thinking. "'Will's monstrous side'." he repeated to himself. "Will, describe to me exactly what you saw when you saw the monster."

"I was sick, but I needed to go to the bathroom late at night." Will started to explain. "I turned on the lights and glanced at the mirror. But... I didn't see myself in the mirror. I saw the monster." Carter walked around and thought some more. "I thought I was just imagining things, but I'm not so sure anymore."

"Considering what Ten said..." Carter said. "I don't really want to say it, but I think that could mean that..."

"That I'm the monster." Will interrupted.

"I don't want to jump to conclusions." Carter said.

"Think about it for a moment. When El and my mom got back from New York, they came in and my room was a mess. Not that... it was destroyed. I... like... remember myself doing that... destroying the room... but at the same time... I don't think I was entirely... me... when I did it." Nobody said anything. Most of the group just looked down at the ground.

"Come with me." Carter said. Everyone stood up and started walking out of the living room with Carter, who started talking while walking. "If you went to city hall a year and a half ago and looked up the official plans for this house, you would see that it had a basement. If you went 6 months ago, you would see that the plans showed that it didn't have a basement." He stopped in the middle of

the hallway and took a small picture off the wall to reveal a keypad. He punched in a 7 digit code, hung the picture back up, then the entire wall swung out to reveal a secret staircase. Carter went down first, turning on the lights as he did.

The basement was filled with more equipment than anyone had ever seen in one room. Even Eleven had never seen so much in one place, which was strange considering that she spent more than a decade living in a laboratory. Carter went to one end of the room and picked up a couple of objects from a shelf and handed them to Will and Eleven.

"I really wish I could do more, but right now the only thing I can do is gather data." Carter said. He then talked directly to Will and Eleven. "Set these up somewhere in your house, just plug them in and let them run. I'll be by to collect the data when I need to." He then looked just at Eleven; "I'm going to have to ask that while this equipment is active, don't use your powers at home. I just don't want anything interfering with them." Eleven nodded. She didn't use her powers too much, but this meant that she would have to get out a ladder to reach the top shelves and she would have to get up from the table if she forgot a fork in the drawer. "I'm going to try my best to get into the Hawkins lab. It's not going to be easy though, they set up a lot of obstacles for me."

---

That weekend, the girls of the group had a sleepover at Lucy's house. They liked spending time with the boys, but sometimes they just liked having some time to themselves. They had decided to bake a bunch of cookies early on, making the kitchen a mess in the process. They didn't mind cleaning it up (even though it took a really long time). They took the finished chocolate chip cookies upstairs to Lucy's room and started eating them while they talked.

"Dustin would certainly win in a fight against Lucas." Amy said to Sarah. Eleven tried to backtrack their conversation in her mind to figure out how they got into this argument, but she couldn't figure it out.

"No he wouldn't." Sarah said, very sure of herself. "Lucas does Karate. He'd kick Dustin's ass."

"Are you kidding?" Amy argued back. "Dustin would..." She struggled to defend her argument. "El... what do you think?" Amy quickly turned to Eleven, who was caught off guard a little when Amy suddenly brought her into the argument. She took a bite out of the cookie she was holding and chewed slowly to give herself some time to think.

"I think..." she said while working to swallow the last bit of cookie she had left. "...that I would win." Sarah and Lucy smiled and started laughing, Amy threw her hands up in frustration.

"Well..." Amy said. She had begun to speak before she had thought out the rest of her sentence. "...Of course you would win. But between Dustin and Lucas, who would win there?"

"I'm not getting involved in that." Eleven said, taking another big bite of cookie and leaning back against the pillows behind her.

"Neither do I." said Lucy from the corner of the room. Amy stood up in a huff.

"I can't be in a room with people who can't understand reason." she said theatrically, before comically storming out. A moment later, she poked her head back through the door and said; "That means I'm going to the bathroom. I'll be back in a couple of minutes." The rest of the girls laughed.

Lucy listened closely for a minute, and when she heard the bathroom door close down the hall, she turned to the others.

"Do you guys notice something different about Amy?" she asked. Eleven and Sarah looked at her, a little confused.

"What do you mean?" Sarah asked.

"I don't know... there's just something... different."

"Different how?" asked Eleven.

"I can't put my finger on it. It's just... there." Sarah said. "You guys probably think I'm crazy. Don't you?"

"No." said Sarah. "I mean... you've known her the longest. If anyone would notice something about her it would be you."

"I guess." said Lucy. She was usually pretty quiet and seemed a little embarrassed that nobody else noticed something about Amy. "Just... pay attention to her when she gets back. OK? With everything that's been happening, I'm a little afraid for her." Both Sarah and Eleven agreed just moments before Amy got back.

"OK. I'm not mad anymore." Amy said as she plopped down on the floor in between Eleven and Lucy. Everyone just looked at her strangely without saying anything. "What's wrong with you guys?" Amy asked with a strange smile to indicate that she was a little weirded-out. Sarah realized how they were being unusual, so she quickly started talking to not seem so weird.

"Nothing." she said a little too quickly.

"You guys are strange, you know that." Amy laughed a little and the others laughed uncomfortably along. Sarah tried to think quickly to come up with something to say.

"El!" she called out. "How are things with Mike?"

"Things are good. Why do you ask?" Eleven responded.

"Just... trying to make conversation. It's boring otherwise." Sarah said back.

"So... you've been together for like a year." Amy said. Interested in the new topic, she leaned in to be more a part of it. "Have you guys made anything official?"

"Official?" Eleven asked. The last thing she remembered doing that was 'official' was sitting in an office while Joyce signed some papers to adopt her. Did she need to sign some papers to date Mike?

"You know..." Amy said, even though Eleven didn't know. "...did you agree that he's your boyfriend and you're his girlfriend?" Eleven thought for a moment. She and Mike spent a lot of time together and she knew that she wanted to be his 'girlfriend', but they had never discussed it.



"No." she said plainly. "I didn't know that was something you had to do."

"Well, I mean, it's not something you 'have' to do, but it's nice to." Sarah said. The group talked about a variety of different things, but they eventually noticed it was late and that they should probably get to sleep.

---

Math class that Monday was a little stressful for Eleven. She spent the whole class sitting next to Mike, wanting to talk about 'making things official', but the teacher was talking and talking so Eleven couldn't. It seemed like years before the bell finally rang, but it eventually did. Eleven and Mike packed up their things, then headed out into the hallway.

Eleven knew what she wanted to talk to him about, but she suddenly found herself anxious when she had an opportunity to do so.

"Mike." she timidly said.

"Yeah." he said back.

"Am I your girlfriend?"

"What?"

"Am I your girlfriend?" Eleven asked again.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I was talking with the girls this weekend and they said something about 'making things official'. So... am I your girlfriend?"

"Yes." Mike said very quickly having just understood what Eleven was talking about. He smiled and stopped in the middle of the hall. He noticed how angry the people behind him had gotten when a couple of them ran into him, so he and Eleven moved off to the side of the hall. "Well... I mean... if you want." Eleven smiled at how much of a fool Mike was making of himself.

"I do want that." Eleven said, looking straight into Mike's eyes. He

looked straight into her eyes as well. They shared a short kiss, but then realized how much time they had spent and that they needed to get to chemistry class.

---

Carter locked the door and turned towards the group of kids that were waiting for him after his chemistry class on Wednesday. On his way over to the table, he did a big victorious fist pump with a smile on his face.

"What are you so happy about?" asked Amy. She was smiling too at this point, it seemed that Carter's mood was rubbing off on the group.

"I did it." Carter said, his smile not leaving his face.

"You did what?" Lucas asked.

"I got an appointment at the Hawkins National Laboratory." Carter said as if he had just won a major award.

"Wow. Good job." Dustin congratulated.

"Thank you, Dustin."

"What does that mean exactly" Mike asked.

"It means that this Saturday, I will officially be going to the lab as an agent with The Coalition and will be preforming an investigation." Carter explained.

"Why?" asked Mike. "Why now? What changed that they're letting you in now but not a month ago?"

"To be honest... I don't know." Carter said. "And that's kind of scary to me."

---

Eleven, Sarah, Amy and Lucy had English together without any of the boys. They enjoyed the lesson Miss Maple gave on Friday about Sherlock Holmes's first appearance in 'A Study in Scarlet'.

"Great week, everyone." Miss Maple announced when she noticed

that they only had a couple more minutes left in class. "I was going to actually have you all read 'A Study in Scarlet' over the weekend..." There was a collective groan from the class. "...but you have all been so great this week that I'm going to move that back. So... no homework this weekend... have fun." Miss Maple received a round of applause from the class. Her cheeks turned red with embarrassment and she took a small bow just as the bell rang.

"Last weekend was fun." Sarah said.

"Yeah, it was." Lucy said. "We should do something again this weekend too."

"That's just what I was about to talk about." Sarah said. "My dad said that we're not doing anything this weekend, so you guys are free to come over."

"Cool." Amy said while she haphazardly shoved her last couple of books in her backpack. "When do you guys want to meet?"

"Right after school today is good for me." said Sarah.

"Oh no." Amy said. "I can't do today."

"Why not?" asked Eleven. She was beginning to notice the 'different' about Amy that Lucy had talked about the previous weekend.

"Uh... I have homework." Amy said.

"It's Friday." Lucy said.

"Yeah... but I just really think I should get started on that English assignment." Amy said.

"Two things." Sarah said. "First: Miss Maple just specifically said that we have no English homework this weekend. Second: you've blown off homework plenty of times to do things with us. Like... to an extent of irresponsibility that makes me gag a little bit."

"I just can't make it today. OK?" Amy said in a very annoyed tone of voice before rushing out of the room.

"That was weird." Sarah remarked.

"I agree." said Eleven. "I understand what you meant about something being different about her, Lucy."

"I'm a little worried about her." Lucy said. "I think we should follow her and see what she does after school." The others agreed.

---

After school, the girls stayed well hidden outside the school, waiting for Amy to come outside.

"There she is." called Sarah when they saw Amy come out of the school. She got on a bike and rode off. Eleven had a bike but the other two didn't so all three of them just ran after Amy. They saw her for a while, but lost her after a couple of turns.

"She's going in the direction of her house." Sarah announced. "That's probably the best place to go." They took off running again and got to Amy's house about ten minutes later.

"She's probably in her room." Lucy guessed when they got to the house. Amy's room was on the second floor, but it was right next to the garage so there was a roof under it where the girls could stand and look in. They carefully climbed a tree next to the garage and inched their way across the roof. Sarah was the first on the roof, so she took the first stealthy look into the window. As soon as she looked in, her eyes widened in surprise.

"That's not what I was expecting." Sarah said. She moved out of the way and Lucy went in to look. She didn't say anything, but she had the same surprised expression that Sarah had. Once Lucy was out of the way, Eleven moved over to get her look in the window.

"Oh!" Eleven exclaimed once she got there. She saw Amy sitting on her bed kissing Dustin.

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A/N: I got stuck on this chapter and I would like to thank candy95 for helping me think up some ideas. She helped me come up with some great story ideas. Some of those ideas are in this chapter, but a

bunch of the really good ones are in chapters to come.

Again: please review. I read every review and they always contribute to the direction the story is taking.

As always: thank you for reading and I hope to see you again in the next chapter!

## 7. Chapter 7: The Storm

"My name is Peter Carter, I have an appointment with Dr. Weston." Carter said. He was parked at the security station outside the Hawkins National Laboratory. The guard went back inside the little building just outside the fence and picked up a clipboard. He flipped through the pages on the clipboard, made a short call on his radio, then came back outside to Carter.

"You're good to go. Dr. Weston will meet you at the door." Carter nodded as acknowledgment. The guard pressed a couple of buttons on a control panel inside the building, then the big gate opened to allow Carter in. He drove up the long drive and parked right in front of the entrance.

A man in a nice suit came out the door just as Carter pulled up to park. Carter took his time and slowly got out of the car. The man smiled politely and quickly walked up to Carter's car to greet him.

"Hello, Dr. Carter. My name is Dr. Weston, I'm in charge of the lab now. We are so sorry we couldn't have you here sooner. We were bogged down by..."

"Save it." snapped Carter. "I don't really care about the excuse, but why are you letting me in now? Why not a couple weeks ago?" Dr. Weston signed.

"Something changed." he said.

"What?" asked Carter curiously.

"Better to show you." Weston turned around and walked into the building. Carter followed close behind.

Carter was already familiar with the secret part of the lab. The bottom levels had been used for years to house Eleven and run experiments on her, but they were sealed off when the gate to the Upside Down opened. The gate had closed and sealed itself when Carter rescued Eleven from the Upside Down almost two years prior, but that part of the lab was still under quarantine. Carter and Weston

both put on white hazmat suits and made sure they were well sealed before proceeding to the elevator to bring them downstairs.

When the doors opened, Carter noticed that some things were different. Last time he was there, there were a bunch of white particles floating in the air and everything just felt a little... different. Carter noticed that the air was clear this time, but there was still something that felt different about this place. There was a small tug telling him that something was not right. The two men proceeded further down the hallway towards the main room.

"We send someone down here just about every month to check that nothing has changed." Dr. Weston explained. "About three months ago, someone noticed a crack in the wall." They entered the room that used to house the gate to the Upside Down. "About two months ago... this started." Carter saw the wall in question.

"Calling it a 'crack' in the wall might be a little bit of an understatement." said Carter. The concrete wasn't simply cracked, there was a ten foot high gash running down the middle of the wall. But that wasn't all. The gash and a fair sized area around it was covered in a strange slime.

"We took samples of the slime and tested it, but we have no idea what it is." Dr. Weston said.

"What's it made of?" asked Carter as he slowly went in to get a closer look.

"We don't know?" Carter quickly turned around.

"How can you not know?"

"Every time we stick it in the spectrometer to analyze it, it burns out the spectrometer."

"Are you sure you're not just doing it wrong?" Carter asked while he examined the slime and crack with his flashlight.

"Every piece of equipment we've used on it has broken. We put a sample of it next to an electron microscope while we were preparing another machine and the microscope exploded a couple of seconds

later."

"Interesting." Carter said very passively as he continued to examine the slime for himself. He decided that he couldn't find out much just by looking at it. "I'm going to need a couple of samples to run my own tests."

"What? Are you crazy?" Dr. Weston asked, seeming genuinely scared for Carter's safety.

"Maybe."

"I mean... how are you even going to get it out of here?"

"I was thinking I would put a bunch in a box and drive home." Carter said, looking at Dr. Weston as if he was the crazy one. "What else would I do?"

"Well... I wouldn't put any of that stuff near an internal combustion engine unless I was suicidal."

"Fine then... give me a box and I'll walk home." Dr. Weston still didn't seem completely OK with the proposition, but he reluctantly agreed.

---

Carter waited upstairs while a bunch of men in hazmat suits collected all the samples he asked for. He was by himself in a big room in the middle of the building and he was kind of bored.

"Dr. Carter?" he heard a voice behind him. Carter turned over to see a tall man with black hair and a lab coat walking over to him. Carter knew he recognized him from somewhere, but wasn't sure exactly where. The man shook Carter's hand. "I'm Bob Leasy. Sarah Leasy's dad." Carter smiled as he remembered he had seen this man at parent teacher conferences at the school. He was Sarah's father.

"I didn't know you worked here." Carter said. He was a little surprised to find out this way.

"Yeah, I do. I'm a project manager."

"Of what exactly."



"I'm not allowed to say." Carter was about to invoke his authority as a Coalition agent, but then he remembered that Sarah's dad didn't know that he was an agent and it was probably best if nobody knew about his cover as a teacher and his job with the agency. "What are you doing here?" Bob asked. Carter thought quickly to come up with a good excuse.

"I was talking with Dr. Weston about some of the work you guys do here and how it could pertain to my chemistry class. At least... the work you're allowed to tell me about." Bob laughed. Another scientist came up.

"Bob, we're ready for you." he said. Bob turned back to Carter.

"Sorry I've got to go so soon. It was nice seeing you." he said as he started to leave.

"Nice seeing you too." Carter said.

---

"Didn't you come with a car?" the security guard at the front gate asked as Carter walked up to the big fence carrying a box about the size of a watermelon.

"Yes. I'll be back for it in a little while." Carter said.

"OK." the very confused security guard said.

"Could you please open the gate?" The guard stopped staring at the box for a moment so he could get over to his control panel and open up the gate for Carter. He pressed the button, but it didn't work.

"That's strange." the guard said.

"What's strange?" asked Carter.

"The gate won't open." Carter looked suspiciously at the box he was holding. Both him and the guard were startled a moment later. The big box that housed the motor to open the gate exploded in a shower of sparks. Carter looked back at the box and wondered if he should actually be bringing this stuff home. The guard got out of the little building and grabbed onto the gate.

"Could you help me with this?" he asked. "I bet we could get it open together."

"Sure." Carter said. He very gently set the box down on the ground next to him and grabbed onto the gate. Both him and the guard pushed and they were quickly able to push it far enough that both Carter and the box could get through.

The walk home took longer than Carter thought it would. Every time a car would come down the road next to him, he would quickly run as far away from the road as he could so nobody's engine would explode. He knew he looked a little strange, but he was fine with that. When he eventually did get home, he left the box in the backyard as far away from the house as he could for a while. He went down to the secret basement and moved everything electronic to one side of the room, then put the box on the other side.

The walk back to the lab to get his car was a lot faster. When he got to the entrance, he found it had been opened a little farther and some technicians were looking inside the box that exploded. The security guard recognized him and let him through.

"We still have no idea what happened." the guard said. "They're looking into it. Sorry for the inconvenience."

"It's really no problem." Carter said as he walked up towards his car. He returned about five minutes later and everyone that was there helped push the gate open just enough so he could fit the car through and drive home.

---

"I'm home." Carter called through the house when he was finally done with his day at the lab. "Tim... are you there."

"Yeah." he heard from upstairs. He walked up and found Tim in his room playing with some LEGOs.

"How's it going?" Carter asked.

"Pretty good." Tim said.

"Are you done with all your homework?"

"Yep."

"Good." Carter stood in the doorway for a moment longer. "I'm going to head downstairs. I have some more work to do." He started to leave.

"Dad." Tim called. Carter immediately stopped and turned back.

"Yeah?" he asked.

"I have a little bit of a headache." Tim confessed.

"I'll grab you some Tylenol." Carter said with a smile, glad to help out.

---

Lucy paced quickly around Sarah's room, trying to think. Sarah was laying down on the bed reading a magazine while Eleven sat on the chair behind Sarah's desk, watching Lucy.

"Oh my God. Oh my God." Lucy repeated to herself as she kept pacing. After they had seen Amy with Dustin the previous day, the girls had gone home, but none of them stopped thinking about it. Sarah called Lucy and Eleven over to her house so they could talk about what they were going to do. So far though, the meeting mostly consisted of Lucy walking around the room talking to herself.

"Dustin... and Amy!" Lucy said. It was a nice break to her continuous chorus of 'of my God'.

"You've said that four thousand times already." Sarah said, not looking away from her magazine to engage Lucy.

"Well... I still can't believe it." Lucy said, trying to give a reason for what she was doing. Sarah was tired of Lucy just doing the same thing for a while, so she sat up and put down her magazine.

"OK. We're starting an actual discussion." she announced. Lucy eventually stopped roaming around the room and they got started. "We all know what Lucy thinks. But I think it's El's turn to talk."

"Me?" asked Eleven "Why me?"

"Because you've known Dustin the longest and you're Amy's friend. What do you make of this?" Eleven thought for a moment. She, like the other girls, had spent the previous night shocked by what they had seen and hadn't really thought about what Amy and Dustin being together actually meant.

"I think that Dustin's a great guy and would be good with Amy." she said. Eleven herself was a little surprised by what came out as her honest opinion.

"I agree." Sarah said. "Lucy, do you want to say a little more?" Lucy took a deep breath in and actually thought about the situation for a moment.

"I guess..." she started before pausing to think some more. "...that I agree." She then took a breath out before quickly adding; "But it's going to take me some time to get used to it. I've known Amy for a while and this is just... so different."

"OK. We're all a little better now." Sarah said. Eleven was impressed with how she was able to lead the conversation and how mature she was while doing it. A little of Sarah's image of maturity went away with her next sentence though. "Now we need to figure out the most fun way to tell her that we know." Sarah got really excited.

"What?" asked Eleven, a little confused as to what she meant.

"Just imagine the look on her face when she realizes that we know that she's together with Dustin." Eleven took a moment to imagine Amy's reaction, she smiled when she got a good image in her mind.

---

It seemed like a long time before school started on Monday. The meeting with Carter after chemistry class went quickly. They asked him how his time at the lab went and he simply said that he 'still wasn't sure'. The group was a little confused as they went into lunch, but they didn't really want to think about it too much. During lunch, the one thing that Sarah, Lucy and Eleven noticed was how far Amy sat away from Dustin, but also how often they glanced at each other while eating.

Eleven had Geography class right after lunch, but then it was straight on to English class with the rest of the girls. Eleven got there right after Lucy, then Sarah showed up right after her. They took their seats and closely watched the door for Amy. It was only about a minute and a half until Amy came into the room.

"Hi, Amy." all three of the other girls said at the same time while failing to keep their faces free of huge smiles.

"Hi, guys." Amy said. She was creeped out. "What's up."

"Not much." Sarah said. "What did you do this weekend?" Amy very quickly said;

"Homework."

"The whole weekend?" asked Lucy. Amy thought for a moment.

"Yes." she eventually said, realizing that she was caught in a lie she couldn't defend for too much longer. She quickly leaned over to get some things out of her backpack as Sarah started to talk again;

"So... last Friday... you weren't... like... sitting on your bed kissing Dustin? Were you?" Amy fell out of her chair and on top of her backpack. The girls helped her back up and once the rest of class made sure she was OK, Amy leaned in close to the other girls and whispered;

"How do you guys know that?"

"With everything happening around here, we were a little worried about you." explained Eleven. "We followed you home after school on Friday to make sure you were OK." Amy was stunned for a moment.

"So..." Amy started after getting over the first wave of shock. "...what do you guys think?"

"We're happy for you." Lucy said. "All of us."

"Really?" Amy asked, a little bit surprised.

"Yes." said Sarah. "Dustin's great. You should be happy with him."

Amy opened her mouth to talk, but the bell rang and Miss Maple started talking immediately, so she couldn't say anything. Instead, she just sat up in her chair and smiled.

---

Eleven went home right after school ended. She opened the door to see Joyce on the phone.

"That's great. I'll talk to you soon." Joyce said to the person on the other end of the line. She went to hang up the phone, but when she saw Eleven, she quickly raised it to her face again and yelled; "Wait! El's here and..." She sighed and hung up the phone. "He had already hung up." she told Eleven.

"Who did?" Eleven asked as she set her backpack down and went into the kitchen to get a snack. Joyce followed her and sat down at the kitchen table.

"Jonathan." she said with a smile.

"Really?" Eleven was glad that Jonathan called as much as he did, despite how expensive it was. "What did he have to say?"

"He said that classes are going good, he's having a great time, and that his roommate is great."

"Glad to hear it. Anything else?" Eleven asked as she looked through the cabinet to find the peanut butter.

"He said that his roommate's family is going to be out of the country over Thanksgiving and asked if he could invite him over here." Eleven found the peanut butter and took it over to the table.

"What did you say?"

"I told him yes, of course."

"So we get to meet..." Eleven struggled to remember Jonathan's roommate's name. He had told her a couple of times, but she had always forgotten. "...Nathan?" she said, hoping she was right.

"Nicholas." Joyce said. "But apparently he goes by Nick."

---

Thanksgiving was on a Thursday, like every year, so the students got Wednesday, Thursday and Friday off of school. Jonathan called another time about a week later and said that Nick was really happy that they invited him and he was certainly coming. He and Jonathan made plans to drive to Hawkins on Wednesday since their classes ended on Tuesday as well. Eleven had experienced Thanksgiving once the previous year, but she wanted to have guests over to see what that was like. There were two beds in Will's room, so they decided that Jonathan and Nick would sleep there a

There was a thunder storm Tuesday night and into Wednesday morning. Eleven was woken up in the middle of the night.

"El... get up." Will said. She looked over at her clock. The face was illuminated so she could see it in the dark. 2:12 AM. Eleven moved closer to her nightstand so she was able to turn on her light. When she did turn it on, she was able to see Will's very scared face. His breathing was ragged, there was a big rip down the side of his shirt and he looked terrified.

"Will, what's wrong?" she asked. She was now completely awake and ready to help Will.

"It happened again. It's worse than last time." Will said.

"What happened?" asked Eleven.

"My room." Will started walking to his room. Eleven got out of bed. As soon as her feet hit the ground, there was a big loud thunderclap. Eleven was startled a little bit, but mostly because she was on edge because of whatever Will was talking about. When she got into Will's room, Eleven's eyes widened.

"Oh." she said. That was the only thing she could say because of the shock. Every drawer of Will's dresser was on the other end of the room and the dresser itself was toppled over on the floor. The curtains were halfway down and there were clothes everywhere. There was a big rip in the middle of Jonathan's mattress as well as a hole in the wall. "We can get this cleaned up by morning." Eleven said, trying to encourage Will a little.

"I guess so." Will said. He was obviously still rattled by everything.

They started by putting all the drawers back in the dresser and situating it in front of the hole in the wall. They were about halfway through cleaning when Eleven had a thought.

"The equipment that Carter gave us! Is it still plugged in and recording?" she asked.

"Let me check." Will said. He had hidden the machines in a corner of the closet by an outlet. "They're all good as far as I can tell." he announced after examining them for a moment.

"Good. We should call Carter and let him know that... something... happened."

"Yeah. I guess so." Will seemed a little scared to tell someone other than his sister about the incident.

"What did happen?" Eleven asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Like... do you remember how all this happened?" she asked, indicating all around the room. Will just sat silent for a moment.

"Sort of." he said. "Like... I remember doing this... but I don't really think it was me doing it. Kind of like last time. I was able to control it a little bit, like... I was able to stop it from getting worse than it was, but I felt like I was... less in charge than I was the last time." He looked uncomfortably around the room for a moment. "What are we going to do with the mattress?" he asked. Jonathan's bed was still in the room with Will's, but it hadn't been used since Jonathan left for college. They needed to think of something because Jonathan would be back the next day and he would ask questions if he discovered a giant rip in his mattress.

"We can just flip it over and replace the sheets." Eleven said. "It's not perfect, but hopefully it'll be OK until Jonathan leaves."

"Yeah, I guess so." Will said again.

---



The next morning was a little tense at the Byers' home. Joyce woke up early and joyfully started making breakfast for everyone. She had been practicing a lot and by this point she was able to make edible omelets almost every time and she was working on making good, un-burnt pancakes. Will and Eleven slept in later than usual, having had a rough night. Eleven was the first to get up.

"What's that smell?" asked Eleven when she got out of her room and went into the kitchen.

"Pancakes." Joyce announced while pouring some batter into the pan.

"They smell... interesting." said Eleven after taking some time to decide on the right adjective for the smell.

"Is that good?" Joyce asked.

"It's better than the smell from the ones you made a week ago." Joyce's attempt at pancakes the previous week almost ended up in a call to the fire department. "When are Jonathan and Nick getting in?" she asked, trying to change the subject so she wouldn't actually have to lie about Joyce's cooking to spare her feelings.

"Jonathan told me about a week ago that they were planning on leaving early in the morning, they're probably already on the way. But it's a long drive so they won't be here until this afternoon."

"I'm excited to see Jonathan again." Jonathan called pretty regularly, but none of the family had actually seen him since they had dropped him off at NYU.

"Where's Will?" Joyce asked. "He should get some breakfast while it's still hot."

"He's probably still asleep." Eleven said quickly. "The storm woke him up last night so he didn't sleep too well."

"Oh. OK." Joyce continued to cook. "How do you know that?"

"What?"

"How do you know that the storm woke him up? We haven't seen him

this morning."

"Uh... The storm woke me up too. I went to the bathroom when it did and I saw Will coming out of the bathroom just as I got there." Eleven lied.

---

A/N: School is back in session and taking up a lot of my time (as it should). From now on there will probably be at least a one day gap in between chapters (unless I feel especially inclined to write on the weekends). Please review as always, I cannot stress how much I appreciate it when you do. Thanks for reading!

## 8. Chapter 8: Thanksgiving

Nancy also came home for Thanksgiving. Mike was excited. It had been almost three months since he had seen her, the longest time in his life that she was away. He woke up at about 8:00 on Wednesday, immediately got dressed, then ran down the stairs. He found his mother in the kitchen cooking breakfast.

"When does Nancy get here?" he asked.

"She said that she was going to start driving at about 7 this morning, so she should be here at about noon." Karen said. Nancy had a friend in Michigan that had a car, but was flying to visit her family over the holiday, so she let Nancy use the car to drive to Hawkins. "You know..." Karen said while cooking. "I remember a couple of years ago when you would dread Nancy coming back. It's nice that you two get along so well." Mike wasn't really paying attention. He was simply trying to figure out what he could do to pass the time until Nancy got home.

It was 8:09 when Mike first looked at the clock, he looked back at it about every three minutes after that to check how much time had passed. He tried to read a book, but couldn't concentrate. He then decided to see if anyone was available on the Super-Comm.

"Hello... is anyone there? Over." he asked while messing around with the antenna a little to try to get a better signal. About two minutes went by without a response and Mike was about to give up when he finally heard;

"Mike... is that you? I'm here. Over." Eleven's voice wasn't very clear over the radio, but still music to his ears.

"It's me." Mike said. "How are things by you? Over." Static came out of the radio for another moment while Mike waited for an answer.

"Things are..." there was another long pause of static while Eleven tried to think of how to describe what was happening. "...strange. Over."

"Strange how? Over."

"Remember when Will's room was all a mess and he saw the Demogorgon? Over."

"Um... yeah. Over."

"It happened again. Over." Mike couldn't find any words. He simply didn't know what to say about what was happening to Will. There was again some static on the com and another voice came in.

"Is anyone here?" asked the voice. It took Mike a moment to recognize who it was since he had never spoken to them on the Super-Comm before.

"Carter, is that you? Over." Mike asked.

"Yeah, it's me." Carter said. There was another moment of silence.

"You have to say 'over' when you're done. It helps to know when we're OK to talk. Over." Mike said.

"OK." Carter said. "I'm having some... issues and could use some help. Did I hear El on the line too? Over."

"Yes you did." Eleven said. "I'm here. Over."

"If you can, could you come over to my house? It's important. Over." Carter's request seemed strange, but it also sounded very urgent. There was static on the line before Eleven finally talked again.

"I think I can come. I just have to be back by sometime early this evening when Jonathan gets home from college. Over."

"I can probably come too. Over." Mike said.

"OK. Thanks." Carter said. "I'm sorry, but I can't say too much because I honestly don't know too much. Over."

---

"Where are you going?" Karen asked when she saw Mike wearing his big coat and putting on his shoes. "I thought you were waiting for

Nancy."

"Yeah... but..." Mike struggled to find an excuse to leave the house. "I thought it would be better if I got some exercise to pass the time. I was going to go out for a walk." Ted heard this from the living room.

"That's a good idea." he called, a little excited that Mike wanted to do exercise. Karen didn't seem to completely agree, but she didn't want to argue with her husband.

"OK. But be back by noon to see Nancy." Karen said. Mike had already opened the front door and was on his way out.

"OK, mom." he called behind him as the door closed.

Carter's house wasn't far away from Mike's and there was a bunch of snow on the ground, so Mike didn't want to take his bike. He stayed on the sidewalks. A couple of them were mainly clear, but some hadn't been shoveled in a couple of days. It took longer than it normally did, but Mike was eventually at Carter's house. He rang the doorbell and Carter opened the door seconds later.

"Hey." Mike said in greeting. "Am I the first one here?"

"Yes." Carter said. Mike walked in and Carter closed the door behind him. Mike started taking off his wet shoes. "I have some hot chocolate all ready in the kitchen, do you want some?"

"Sure." Mike said. Carter disappeared into the kitchen. He was still in the kitchen when the doorbell rang. "Could you get that?" Carter called. Mike opened the door expecting to see Eleven, but he saw both Eleven and Will.

"Hey." Mike said. "I wasn't expecting Will. No offense."

"None taken." Will said, not really seeming like himself. Mike noticed Eleven rubbing her forehead as if she was in pain.

"Are you OK?" he asked her.

"What?" Eleven noticed what she was doing. "Oh... yeah, I'm fine." She quickly took her hand down from her face.

Carter came out of the kitchen with three glasses of hot chocolate and they all went to the living room. The room was quiet for a couple of minutes while everyone started drinking their hot chocolate to warm up a little bit.

"We had an... incident last night." Eleven eventually said.

"Like what?" Carter asked.

"I tore apart my room again." Will confessed. They went over all the details that he told Eleven in the night, but nobody knew what to do about it. The room fell silent again.

"Where's Tim?" Eleven asked, hoping to make some conversation. Carter quickly finished taking a sip from his mug.

"He's staying at a friend's house today." he said.

"That's nice. It took me a while until I went over to someone else's house. Well... other than Mike." She looked over to her boyfriend and they shared a smile.

"It's nice, but not all that nice." Carter admitted.

"What do you mean?" Will asked.

"Tim has been getting headaches all the time, but only at home. It's gotten bad enough that we can't have Thanksgiving dinner here. Elizabeth is still coming over for dinner, but not full-on Thanksgiving dinner. At first I was worried that the headaches were asbestos or something all over the house, but not so much anymore." Carter looked at the others in the room and could see that they all wanted to ask him the same question. "It's probably best to just show you." The kids quickly finished their hot chocolate and Carter took their mugs back to the kitchen.

Carter went over to the entrance of his secret basement and opened the door. As soon as it opened, Eleven scrunched her eyes shut and rested her head in her hand.

"Are you OK?" Mike asked, moving over to Eleven as quickly as he could.

"It's just a headache." she assured him.

"I wouldn't be so sure about that." Carter said. Everyone looked up at him. "I'm going to leave the basement door open. If the headache gets too bad, go back out." The kids were confused and scared, but when Carter started walking down the wooden stairs, they followed him without question.

"What happened to your basement?" asked Mike. He looked to one side to see a big mess. All the equipment that had been nicely ordered the last time he was there was now all haphazardly pushed to one side of the room. The other side of the room was empty except for about ten small glass bottles.

"I still don't know what that stuff does..." Carter pointed to the glass bottles. "...and I need a place to study it."

"Why did you shove everything else over there?" Mike asked while looking at the slightly less than orderly end of Carter's basement.

"Whatever is in those bottles has strange effects on electronic equipment." Carter said. "A big motor exploded while I was taking it home just from being near that stuff."

"What do you mean 'that stuff'?" asked Will. "What is it?"

"I don't know." Carter said. "It's some slime that I got on my trip to the lab. I'm not able to use electronics to analyze it for fear of things exploding, so I'm limited to some old-fashioned tests. I tried to separate some of the stuff into its components and I found out that it contains water. But it's really heavy water. There's tons of deuterium and tritium in it. A higher concentration than is found naturally anywhere on Earth." Carter looked over to see Eleven leaning on the wall, holding her head with both hands while Mike stood by her, trying to comfort her. "You can go upstairs if you want." Carter told her.

"No." Eleven said. "I can stay." Instead of ignoring the headache, she tried to focus on it and tell what it was. Everyone was so focused on Eleven that they didn't see Will creeping closer and closer to the bottles. Mike looked up from Eleven for a moment to look at Carter,

but over his shoulder he saw Will.

"What's up, Will?" he asked. Carter spun around to look. Will was now only about two feet away from the table.

"Whatever that is, it's making me feel strong." Will said. "The closer I get, the better I feel." He stared at the bottles, but then looked up at the others. "Don't you feel that?"

"I don't feel anything except slightly scared near them." Carter said. "And they're obviously not making El feel very strong." Will took a final step closer and picked up one of the bottles.

"I just feel like it's... important that I have this." Will said. Carter inched closer to Will.

"It's too dangerous. We don't know what it is yet." he said. Will was making him more scared than he had been in a long time. "Just put it down. It will be better than everyone." Will was still entranced by the bottle he was holding.

"Put it down, Will." Eleven demanded from the wall that she was leaning against. Will shook his head when he heard his sister's voice and slowly put the bottle back down on the table, but didn't stop staring at for another couple of seconds. Carter took a deep breath in, then a long breath out.

---

Back upstairs in the foyer, everyone was still shaken by the events that took place in the basement. They all agreed it would be best if everyone just went home. The kids put on their shoes and didn't say anything to each other as they left. Mike's head was filled with thoughts as he walked home. He didn't really notice where he was going or what was around him. He didn't even notice the Dodge Aries in the driveway of his house. He only really started paying attention to things when he got to his front door and opened it.

"There he is!" Mike heard very loudly right as he closed the door. Before he was able to realize what was happening, Nancy ran over to him and wrapped him up in a hug. Mike's eyes went wide in surprise, but once he came out of his thoughts and realized what was



happening to him, he hugged back. It was a while before Nancy let go of him.

"When did you get here?" Mike asked.

"Only about ten minutes ago. I was able to put my suitcase, ask mom where you were, then you got here." Nancy smiled. "How was your walk?" she asked. There was a hint of sarcasm to her voice when she asked this question because of how out of character it was for Mike to go on a walk.

"Good." Mike said.

"Don't change too much while I'm gone, OK?"

"OK." Mike said with a little laugh.

---

Will and Eleven opened the door. They had told Joyce that they were going to Carter's house. Eleven told her that Carter wanted their help with something, which was the truth. Eleven did not, however, tell her about what happened with Will.

"What did Peter want?" Joyce asked when they got in the door. Eleven thought quickly.

"He had something that he couldn't identify." she said, telling the truth again.

"What was it?" Joyce asked, taking a sip from the coffee mug she had.

"No idea." This was also the truth, but Eleven chose to not tell Joyce about the effects the slime had on her and Will.

"OK." Joyce said, stirring her coffee. "What's he doing for Thanksgiving?"

"Who?" Eleven asked, distracted by thoughts of the events of the morning.

"Peter." Joyce said.

"Oh. Nothing." Eleven said.

"Nothing?"

"Yeah. He has... asbestos or something in his house and it gives Tim headaches so he's staying with a friend. He's getting it checked out soon." Eleven said, deciding it was OK to tell a small lie.

"Well that's not OK." Joyce said, getting up from her chair and walking into the living room.

"What are you doing?" Will asked, talking for the first time since the incident at Carter's house. He was somewhat worried.

"I'm calling Peter and inviting him and Tim here for dinner tomorrow. We have extra space." Both Eleven and Will wanted to protest, but neither could think of a good reason to. Joyce picked up the phone and dialed. It only rang a couple of times before Carter picked up.

"Carter." he said when the line connected.

"Hi, Peter. It's Joyce." Joyce said.

"Hi, Joyce." Carter said. "Is something wrong?"

"Not really... I heard you aren't having Thanksgiving dinner at your house."

"Yeah... well... I'm having some people over on Saturday to check my house to see what's causing Tim's headaches so he's staying with a friend for now." Carter took a risk by assuming that Eleven and Will had told Joyce that he wasn't having dinner at his house because of Tim's headaches.

"I heard about that and I'd like to invite you over here for tomorrow." Carter breathed a sigh of relief. The story he told apparently matched up with the one the kids told Joyce.

"Thank you very much for the invitation, but I'm afraid I can't accept."

"Why not?"

"I actually already have plans."

"Really? With who?" Joyce asked. It seemed strange to her that Carter would have made plans.

"I'm having Elizabeth over for dinner." Joyce was confused.

"Who's Elizabeth." she asked.

"My girlfriend."

"You have a girlfriend?"

"Yes. I guess I told the kids a little while ago to keep it quiet, but I never meant to keep it from you." Carter was laughing a little bit. He considered Joyce as part of the inner circle around him and had just assumed she knew about him and Elizabeth. It didn't come as too much of a shock though, considering how many other things they hid from Joyce.

"Why would you want them to keep it quiet?" Joyce was a little scared, thinking about Carter's line of work.

"Elizabeth is El's English teacher, Miss Maple. She just didn't want a bunch of rumors flying around the school."

"Oh." Joyce was relieved that it wasn't anything bad. "Well... invite her too if you want. We're having a big dinner and we would love to have you here."

"I'll certainly ask, but I'm not making any promises." Carter said.

"Thanks. We hope you can make it."

---

The rest of the afternoon was quiet at the Byers' house. Will chose to stay in his room and Eleven just read a book on the couch in the living room. The phone rang again a couple of hours after Joyce had called Carter.

"Hello." Joyce said. Eleven looked up from her book to see Joyce's face light up when she heard the voice on the other line. Joyce listened for a little bit then said; "OK, see you soon." Then she hung up. She turned to Eleven. "That was Jonathan, he was using a payphone so he couldn't talk for long. He says he's at a rest stop about two hours away and that everything is going well."

"That's good to hear." Eleven said. The phone rang again almost immediately after she finished talking. Joyce picked it up, had another short and pleasant exchange, then hung up again.

"That was Peter." she said. "He said he's coming to dinner tomorrow."

"That's good." Eleven said while thinking about if it really was.

It was only about another twenty minutes before they heard a car pulling up outside. Joyce opened the front door and saw Jonathan getting out of a small car with who she assumed to be Nick.

"Jonathan!" Joyce called. She ran out of the house and gave Jonathan a big hug. Will came out of his room and started to smile. Will and Eleven went outside too and took their turns greeting Jonathan before everyone noticed that they were ignoring Nick.

"You must be Nick." Joyce said as she walked over to the boy on the other side of the car. Some introductions were made before Jonathan and Nick got their luggage and the whole family went inside.

---

The doorbell rang right at 4:00 PM the next day. Joyce opened the door with a big smile.

"You're right on time." she announced to Carter, Elizabeth and Tim who were standing before her. Carter and Elizabeth were both carrying dishes of food wrapped in aluminum foil. They dropped the dishes off in the kitchen, then everyone broke off into their own conversations. Carter was a little afraid what Elizabeth would think when she saw how close him and Joyce were, but when he looked over to the living room, he saw the two of them laughing and having a good time.

Dinner was ready right at 6:00. Over the previous couple of years, Joyce learned that it was best to leave all the cooking work to Jonathan. He liked to do it and was always able to come up with something delicious. He called everyone over to the table that was already covered with all kinds of food. Once everyone was sitting down, he brought over the pride of his work: the turkey. It was beautifully golden-brown and everyone's mouths were watering just looking at it.

"Carter, would you like to do the honor of carving the turkey or us?" Jonathan asked once everyone had some time to admire the bird.

"I couldn't possibly be trusted to finish off your handiwork." Carter said.

"Please, you're a guest of ours." Jonathan insisted. There were a couple of words of encouragement said by everyone else around the table.

"OK. If you all want me to carve the turkey, I'll do it." Carter stood up and Jonathan handed him the knife. Carter expertly carved the turkey and gave everyone a fair share of it. He returned to his seat, and everyone began. The first couple of minutes consisted of everyone passing around the other dishes that were already on the table, then noticing that they couldn't fit any more on their plates until they ate something. There wasn't much talking for a little bit as everyone happily stuffed their faces, but a couple minutes in, they found a good pace so that they could eat and talk.

"This food is wonderful, Jonathan." Elizabeth said. "Who taught you to cook like this?"

"Certainly not me." Joyce said, getting a small laugh from around the table.

"I just liked cooking from early on and kind of taught myself, trial and error." Jonathan said. "The first things I cooked were terrible and we had to call the fire department once." Another laugh was shared, then the room got quiet while everyone ate some more.

"So Joyce..." said Nick. "Tomorrow, Thanksgiving is over so it's

officially the start of the Christmas season. It won't be too cold, are you going to put some lights on the house?" Joyce, Jonathan, Will and Eleven all shared a glance between themselves.

"No. We don't put up Christmas light." Joyce said.

"Why not?" Nick was intrigued and Elizabeth looked a little curious as well. Joyce tried to think of an explanation that didn't involve a monster and another dimension.

"It's... a long story. I don't like to talk about it."

## 9. Chapter 9: The Dance

A/N: SORRY, I POSTED CHAPTER 9 FROM MY PREVIOUS STORY. IF YOU READ THIS ON 12 JANUARY, THAT WAS WRONG. PLEASE READ IT AGAIN. SORRY. In case anyone was wondering, waiting for a game to download over slow WiFi gives one a lot of time to write. I'm excited for where the story is going. This is a kind of short chapter, but there's a lot of big stuff coming up soon. Please read and review.

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Thankfully, nothing happened to Will while Jonathan and Nick were over. They left the house to go back to New York on Saturday. Nancy left the Wheelers' house that Sunday because she didn't have as long of a drive. November turned to December and to Eleven, December meant the Snow-Ball. She had gone with Mike the previous year, but they weren't able to enjoy it because of an attack from Ten. It had been on the last Friday before winter break the previous year, but had been moved to the first Saturday of the winter break because of some bureaucratic reason that nobody really cared enough to ask about. Carter promised her that this year he would make sure nothing would happen. Mike quickly and eagerly agreed to go with her, but things were a little different with Sarah, Amy and Lucy.

"Why aren't you going?" Sarah asked Amy. "We had fun last year... to a point." The girls had gotten involved in Ten's attack and they too weren't able to fully enjoy the dance. They had met at Sarah's house on a Saturday just to have fun, but the conversation turned to the Snow-Ball.

"I really want to go with Dustin, but he's scared." Amy said.

"Make him come!" demanded Sarah.

"I've been trying to."

"What's he scared of?" asked Eleven.

"I honestly don't know." Amy said while throwing her hands up in the air.

"I think I do." said Lucy, speaking up for the first time in the conversation. Lucy often sat back and didn't say anything so that she could simply listen, this made her the voice of reason a lot of the time. The other girls quieted down and payed attention to Lucy. "First of all: it's nothing against you, Amy. Dustin is in unfamiliar territory and he doesn't want anything to go wrong. He knows that going to the dance with you would mean at least telling Mike that you two are together and he's just scared of what they'll say. I'm sure he's gone through every possible scenario in his head of what would happen except for the one that actually would happen."

"Which would be...?" asked Amy. Lucy continued;

"That everyone would be happy for him, but they might make fun of him every once in a while. Frankly, he deserves that because of how much he did it to Mike."

"How are we going to get him to see that?" Amy asked. The room was silent for a moment except for some quiet music drifting out of the radio in the corner.

"I should tell Mike." Eleven said. The others looked at her, indicating her to go on. "If I ask him, he won't make fun of him... for now... and hopefully Dustin will get over some of the fear." Sarah, Amy and Lucy slowly nodded in agreement.

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Eleven pulled Mike aside on their way to chemistry class from math. She led him into a quiet corner of the school where they could talk for a couple of minutes and not be disturbed.

"I need to ask you a favor." said Eleven.

"OK." said Mike. He was still a little confused as to what they were doing in an empty corner of the school.

"First you have to promise to do everything I say."

"Well... what are you going to ask me?"

"Just promise."



"OK. I promise to do everything you say." Eleven took a deep breath in.

"You can't tell anyone... but Dustin and Amy are together." Mike's eyes went wide.

"What? Well... good for them but I have a feeling that this isn't all that you wanted to tell me."

"It's not. I need you to tell Dustin privately that you know, but you can't make fun of him at all. You just have to encourage him."

"Any specific reason?"

"Amy wants to go to the Snow-Ball with him, but he's scared." Mike looked around for a moment.

"OK. I'm not happy that I don't get to tease him, but I promise." Mike smiled and Eleven quickly leaned in and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

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Most of the chemistry class stayed a little while after the bell rang to wish Carter happy holidays. It was a couple of minutes before he was able to lock the door and start the meeting.

"I don't really have anything to say right now. You all know pretty much as much as I know and nothing new has happened." Carter said.

"I suppose we just need to wish you happy holidays." Amy said with a smile. The rest of the group joined in to agree except for Eleven. She spoke once the others quieted down a little.

"There's still one thing that I'm stuck on." she said.

"What's that?" Carter asked, his face turning serious.

"When we went to go meet with Ten, she said something about working for 'The Legion'. Have you figured out what that is?"

"No." Carter said honestly. "But there is a whole team of Coalition

agents working on it."

"Have they found anything?"

"Pretty much nothing. They have a couple of possible leads, but whatever The Legion is, they're good at hiding." Eleven hung her head a moment to think.

"Well if that's all..." she said. "Happy holidays, Carter."

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Carter always made waffles on Saturdays. He knew that Eleven liked them, so the first day that he had Tim with him, he decided to make them for him. Tim said that they were the best food he ever had and so Carter made it a tradition that he would make Tim a special breakfast every weekend. Over the months, the tradition changed a little. Different recipes were tried, the topping selection always varied, but the biggest change was that after Elizabeth started spending a lot of nights with Carter, she joined in too. Elizabeth's family waffle recipe was the best they had every tried, so they decided to just stick with that one. Waffle Saturdays just seemed a little nicer when she was around, at least they did to Carter, he didn't know what Tim thought.

On this particular Saturday, Elizabeth was out of town at an English teaching conference in Cincinnati, so it was again just Carter and Tim. A big stack of waffles were already on a big plate in the kitchen, but Carter put one more scoop of batter into the iron just to finish off the mixing bowl. He closed the lid then went to thinking a little bit.

"Tim." he said.

"Yeah, Dad?" Tim asked, looking up from the chocolate covered waffle on his plate. Carter thought for another moment about what he was going to say.

"What do you think about Elizabeth?" he eventually asked.

"I like her." Tim said before stuffing another chunk of waffle in his mouth, getting chocolate all over his chin in the process.

"What... specifically do you like about her?" Tim had to wait to

swallow his food before responding.

"Everyone in school has a mom and a dad. Everyone in my books has a mom and a dad. You feel like my dad, she feels kinda like my mom." Tim took another big bite to finish off his waffle. Carter just slowly nodded and sunk into his thoughts while waiting for the timer on the waffle iron to go off.

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Mike had gotten Dustin to agree to go to the Snow-Ball. Dustin seemed kind of reluctant, but Amy was happier than ever when he told her that he would go with. Like the previous year, the girls all met at Sarah's house to get ready, they would meet the boys at the school. They all put on their dresses and Sarah, Amy and Lucy started putting on makeup. Eleven could put on makeup, but she wasn't very good at it. Especially for an occasion so special as the Snow-Ball, she preferred to have Sarah do it for her.

"Every time I've been over to your house, I've only met your dad." Eleven said while trying on one of Sarah's necklaces.

"Yeah..." Sarah said, her voice sounding different from the happy and excited tone she had had earlier. "My... My mom died when I was eight." Sarah said. Eleven turned to look at her friend who looked to be blinking away tears.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said anything."

"No. It's OK." Sarah stared at herself in the mirror for another moment. She put the cap on her lipstick and her voice turned back to the excited state it was, trying to bring up the mood of the room. "I'm done." she announced, standing up. "El, your turn." Eleven gave a weak smile and sat down in the chair that Sarah had just vacated.

Sarah always did a good job with Eleven's makeup, but this time was especially good. She expertly did every bit of it. She soon announced that she was done. Eleven turned to look at the mirror next to her. She smiled when she saw herself.

"Pretty." was the only thing she could think to say. She and Sarah went down to Amy and Lucy. They all took some time to compliment

each other before Sarah's dad came into the room carrying his car keys.

"You girls all look quite pretty." he said with a smile. "Are you guys ready to go?" Mr. Leasy was a tall, thin man. He had jet black hair that was always well kept. Eleven liked him. He smiled a lot and seemed extra nice when she was around.

"We're ready, dad." Sarah said. Mr. Leasy smiled and led all the girls out to the car. It was a tight squeeze because of the size of some of the dresses the girls had on, but they made it to the school.

When they pulled up to the school, they saw Mike and Dustin standing together off to the side of the entrance. They were both wearing suits that only fit them most of the way. Dustin still looked uncomfortable being there, but Mike looked just the opposite. He seemed excited and was trying to transfer that feeling onto Dustin. Dustin got even more tense when he saw the girls walking towards them. Mike walked over and gave Eleven a giant hug, then they separated a little bit so they could maneuver their faces together for a kiss. Amy went up to Dustin and gave him a hug too. He seemed to relax a little bit about her, but his eyes were still darting around, looking at everyone else.

"I'll be back to pick you girls up right at 10." said Mr. Leasy. He smiled and got back in his car.

"Bye." said all the girls together while Mike and Dustin simply stood there.

It only took about ten minutes for them all to get into the gym. Dustin and Amy went straight over to the snack table, Amy knew that Dustin would be happy there. Mike and Eleven, however, went straight to the dance floor. They had only gotten to dance for about thirty seconds the previous year before Eleven realized that Ten was there and was about to attack them, so they wanted to make the most of the dance that year. There were a couple of fast songs at first. Neither Mike nor Eleven knew exactly how to dance to them. They started out making some small, timid movements, but they got bigger and crazier once each of them realized how much the other enjoyed watching that.

The first slow song of the night came on. Eleven glanced over to the tables on the other side of the room. She saw Amy pulling a slightly embarrassed Dustin up to the dance floor. They stayed on the other side of the room, but Eleven could see Dustin had started to enjoy himself. Eleven turned her head to look at Mike, who was holding her as they swayed softly.

"What's wrong?" Mike asked.

"What do you mean?" Eleven asked. She didn't think anything was wrong.

"Nothing. Your face... it just looked kind of... sad."

"No... It's just..." Eleven struggled to explain exactly how she was feeling. "I'm having such a good time and that's great, but I know at the end of the night, we have to go back to it all. Will's problems and Ten and whatever The Legion is... that's all still there." Mike stared into his girlfriend's eyes.

"True, that is all still there. But it's not here. None of that is here. The only important thing right now is that we have a good time. Here, we don't have to worry about anything except for that." Eleven smiled slightly. She leaned in and rested her head on Mike's shoulder, wishing she could stay there forever.

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The winter break started right after the Snow-Ball and since Christmas was on a Wednesday that year, so they got an entire two weeks off of school. Even though Joyce didn't put up lights on the house, they did get a tree that year and Joyce let them put lights on that. She hadn't the previous year and Will saw it as a sign that his mother was getting over some of the trauma from the week that he was stuck in the Upside Down. Nick's family was on another one of their international travels, so Nick came with Jonathan again and spent the holiday with the Byers. Mike wasn't on vacation that year like he was the previous, so he and Eleven spent a lot of time together.

When Eleven woke up on Christmas eve morning, she saw that a new layer of snow had been dumped on Hawkins. Mike called her on the

Super-Comm and invited her sledding, something that she had never done before. By the afternoon, she decided she liked sledding a lot. Back at home, she found Joyce baking some Christmas cookies and was immediately scared. She became a little less scared when she found out that Jonathan had made the dough. Once the cookies were out of the oven, the rest of the evening was just sitting in the family room and talking. Sometimes, Joyce and Eleven would have some fun annoying Jonathan and Will by loudly and terribly singing Christmas songs. Jonathan and Will covered their ears while Nick just laughed.

It was late in the night when it was finally time to go to bed. Will was once again sleeping on a cot in Eleven's room while Jonathan and Nick shared Will's room. The night was silent and since there were no neighbors nearby, they should have gotten a good night of sleep, but they didn't.

Eleven heard her bedroom door quietly squeak open and the floorboards creaked near it. She groggily looked up at her clock. 2:47 AM. She closed her eyes and returned her head to the pillow.

"Will... is that you?" she asked, thinking that maybe he had gotten up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom.

"What?" came Will's voice from the cot next to her. Eleven was confused. Her brain went into overdrive trying to figure out who was at her door. She sat up and opened her eyes. Through the little light streaming through the windows, all she could see was a man in a ski mask holding a gun that was pointed right at her. The man quickly pulled the trigger on the gun. It didn't fire a bullet like Eleven had expected, but a dart. She thought quickly and used her powers to push the dart out of the way. It curved away from its intended path and stuck in the wall behind the bed. Eleven used her powers again to force the intruder back against the other wall. She jumped out of bed and went to get the gun that had fallen to the floor. Eleven was surprised when she suddenly flew back and hit the other wall of the room. She stayed stuck on the wall right next to the dart that missed her. Her concentration broke and the intruder was released. She looked over at the unknown man. From the little she could see of his face, she could see that he was using powers just like she had. She was about to fight back, but the man fired another dart and she didn't have enough time to react, it went straight into her arm.

Eleven tried to say something, but couldn't. The sedative that had started coursing through her veins was fast acting. The last thing she remembered seeing was the man pulling the dart out of the wall and sticking it in Will's arm. He pulled a radio out of his pocket.

"I did it." he said into the radio. The sedative distorted how Eleven heard his voice so she had no idea who he was. "I got both of them."

## 10. Chapter 10: The Legion

A/N: **THIS ONE IS IMPORTANT:** I accidentally posted chapter 9 of my previous story instead of this story as the previous chapter. I changed it early on the morning of 13. January, 2017. If you read the chapter sometime before that, please go back and read it again. It's important for this chapter (and this chapter is a big one). Thanks to candy95 for pointing out my error. I'll take extra care to make sure that doesn't happen again. Please enjoy.

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Tim's first Christmas started out pretty great. He went down the stairs in the morning to find the tree surrounded by colorful packages. Carter and Elizabeth were already in the kitchen making breakfast.

"Good morning." Elizabeth said while beating some egg whites for the waffles. They had a great breakfast then went into the living room. Carter handed Tim the biggest box from next to the tree. It was massive to him.

"For me?" Tim asked.

"Yes, of course." Carter said. Tim began eagerly tearing at the paper until he could see what it was.

"A bike!" he announced while smiling. Carter sat down and put his arm around Elizabeth. They smiled while Tim opened the box.

"We'll have to put it together." Carter said. "But we can do that after the rest of the presents." All three of them laughed, just having a good time.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang. Carter didn't immediately get up, but he looked over towards the foyer.

"Who could that be?" he asked. He looked at Elizabeth who shrugged slightly. The doorbell rang again and whoever was outside started banging loudly on the door. Carter got up and walked into the entrance hall. He glanced up at a picture on the wall. He had a gun hidden behind it... just in case. The banging on the door continued.



Carter pulled the door open so quickly that Joyce almost punched him trying to knock on the door again.

"Joyce! What are you doing here?" Carter asked. He quickly looked her up and down. Her face was red, probably because of the cold, but her eyes looked more red than normal.

"Will and El are gone." she said. Her breathing was ragged. "I saw them last night, I put them to bed... But they weren't there this morning." Carter saw the desperate look in her eyes.

"I'll be right back." he said to Joyce. He ran back into the living room. "I'm so sorry, but this is an emergency. I have to go."

"Um... OK." said Elizabeth. She was very confused. He gave Elizabeth a quick kiss and then ran back to the foyer to get his coat. He was out the door and away before Elizabeth could figure out what was happening.

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Eleven slowly woke up. The first thing that she remembered was that it was Christmas, she smiled to herself a little bit. But then, she noticed she had a bad headache and all the memories of what happened in the night came back. Her eyes snapped open. She looked around and saw that she was in a big, dark, empty room, tied to a chair. She struggled for a moment, but her hands were well tied. She tried to use her powers, but nothing happened. Eleven felt something on her neck, she looked down and saw a black collar with some electronics sticking out of it. Her powers had been blocked. She looked over to her side to see Will also tied to a chair. He was slowly waking up. He shook his head for a moment, then slowly opened his eyes. Will went through some of the same realizations as Eleven, but he hadn't been awake that night to see the man with the dart gun.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"No idea." Eleven replied. Will looked at the thing around her neck.

"No powers?"

"Yeah." There was a long pause.

"Do you know how we got here?"

"Yeah. Last night, there was a guy that broke into the house and shot us with a dart gun. I tried to stop him, but he also had powers."

"Was it Ten?"

"No. He was wearing a ski mask but I could tell that it was a man." A door loudly opened behind them and a new voice came.

"I want to make a correction." The voice said. Eleven's eyes went wide when she heard who it was. "I broke into your room, but I was invited into the house." Nick walked and sat down in a chair in front of Eleven and Will.

"Nick!" Will said in shock.

"Sort of." Nick said. He turned to Eleven. "I think you can figure out my real name." Eleven thought for a moment.

"Nine." she said. Nine smiled and slowly started clapping.

"Well done." he congratulated.

"Where are we?" asked Eleven.

"Look around. You should know this place pretty well." Eleven looked around the room a little closer than she did before. Her eyes went wide when she saw the bathtub, then the big oozing crack in the wall. They were in the basement of the Hawkins National Laboratory. "You know..." Nine said. "...you almost stopped me last night. But then again... you didn't."

"Oh, please stop with the bragging." came another voice from the open door. Footsteps neared the group until they could see Ten come and stand behind Nine. "You'll have to excuse my brother. For some reason, he always *needs* to be the best."

"I don't *need* to be the best." Nine argued.

"Admit it, yes you do." Ten turned back to the kids. "We were born at the same time and now he is always trying to prove that he's better

than me."

"I am the older one." Nine said somewhat arrogantly. Ten scoffed.

"You are 32 minutes older. That doesn't count for much." she argued.

"Stop fighting." said a third and completely unknown voice. Nine stood up from his seat. "This is our moment of triumph, not your opportunity to bicker." The voice belonged to a formally dressed woman. It looked like she was in her late fifties. Her hair was blonde, but turning to white. She slowly walked over and sat down in the chair that Nine had just vacated. A very soft but cold smile spread across her mouth. "Hello, Will. Hello, Eleven." she said as if they were old friends.

"Who are you?" Eleven asked aggressively. The woman very calmly answered.

"My name is Mallory Brenner. I think you knew my brother." Eleven got even angrier when she hear the name 'Brenner'. She thought back to all the horrible things Dr. Brenner did to her as a child. "I see you've already met Nine and Ten." she continued. "We are The Legion."

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Christmas was never such a happy time for Sarah since it was so close to the anniversary of her mother's death. Her dad always tried to make it extra special for her, though. She always got more presents than all of her friends and they usually went on some expensive vacation. On this particular Christmas however, they stayed in Hawkins. She was halfway through unwrapping a new book when they heard an electronic buzzing coming from her father's room.

"I'll be right back." her dad said. He got up from the couch and went up to his room. Sarah was confused. Usually, her father went out of the way to not get any distractions on Christmas. She could hear him faintly as he talked over a radio upstairs. "That's great news. I'm on the way." Sarah stood up as her dad came back down the stairs.

"Where are you going?" she asked him.

"The lab." he said. "I just need you to help me out with one thing. Did Dr. Carter say anything... strange about this winter break?"

"Why?" asked Sarah. She was getting a little afraid.

"Because..." her dad thought of an answer for a minute. "It's time you knew the truth." he said.

"What truth?"

"The truth about my work. I don't actually work for the Hawkins National Laboratory." he said with a soft smile, as if he was expecting Sarah to be excited about everything he was saying. "I work for something called The Legion." A short gasp escaped Sarah's mouth.

"The Legion." she repeated. "That's... Those are the people that tried to take El away last year!"

"Believe me when I say that the ends will justify the means." The smile never left her father's face. "You being friends with Eleven has been great. I was able to learn so much about her and now she's going to fulfill her destiny. Her true purpose." Sarah started breathing quickly as she thought. So many things were tumbling around her brain at once.

"You told me that I should be nice to El when she was just 'the new girl'. You made sure I was friends with her and that she would come over as much as possible... You used me." Sarah was yelling by the time she finished.

"I wouldn't call it that. Come with me. See the fruits of our labor."

"No!" Sarah yelled, tears started to come from her eyes. "I know that you're on the wrong side. Stop this!"

"There is no way in the world I would do that." Bob Leasy insisted. He was no longer smiling. "You're coming with me whether you like it or not." He grabbed Sarah's arm and started to pull her towards the garage. Sarah kicked her father between the legs and he went down immediately. She grabbed her coat from the front closet as fast as she could and ran out the door. It was another couple of seconds before Bob was able to stand again. He picked up his radio from the counter

and pressed the button on the side to talk into it again.

"My daughter just ran away. She knows where you are." he said. "I'm going to go after her."

"No. It doesn't matter." Mallory Brenner's voice came from the radio. "We're too far along already, they can't stop us."

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Brenner came back into the room with Will and Eleven and sat back down in her chair. Will was surprisingly the first one to talk.

"If... if..." he stuttered. "...I know... Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve... Where... where is One through Eight?"

"Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight were lost in the pursuit of our goal." Brenner responded calmly. "One, however. That's a different story." She observed the two children sitting before her. Will simply looked scared, but Eleven looked angry. "Would you like to know why you two are here?" she asked. She waited for an answer for a moment, but once she saw that none was coming, she continued anyway. "The Demogorgon, as you call it, is an ancient monster. It used to terrorize towns and villages around the world. It has a lifespan of a couple hundred years, and when it's on the brink of death, it chooses a successor." Mallory looked over to Will. "That's you." she said. "Usually, the successor is wrapped in a sort of cocoon, then the old Demogorgon will protect it until it hatches. You..." she was talking directly to Will. "You are special. Your mother and her friend pulled you out before it was done, but from what we can tell, you're still going through the transformation. Just slower than normal."

"We still don't know why we're here." Eleven said, gritting her teeth. All her least favorite people in the world were in one room and she was powerless against them.

"I was getting to that." Mallory said, her composure never wavering. "Just before the birth of Christ, the monster came to Rome. It usually attacked villages until they were no more, then moved on. But this time... this time it had the largest metropolis in the world. Its reign of terror and fear started and nobody had any idea how to stop it."

"There was one person that seemed to have the power to do something. He had similar powers to you, Eleven. They called him 'One', because he was the one that had the power to protect them. People thought they were given to him by the gods. We still don't know where he got them from, but we're confident it wasn't that." Brenner smiled a little, as if they were supposed to laugh at a joke. "This person attracted the monster to him and locked it in its own hunting grounds: the Upside Down. But One locked himself away too. Every couple hundred years, it gathered all its power to get back here. But it only was able to feed a little bit and choose a successor, One was always drawing him back.

"One's friends in Rome were devastated after he vanished with the Demogorgon, so they entered into a pact together to bring him back. They knew he had more plans for the world that he was never able to accomplish. They vowed that when he got back, they would be his legion, ready to follow him anywhere. None of them were able to accomplish their goal in their lifetimes, but The Legion never died out. It has survived in us.

"We in this room are not all the members of The Legion. We reach around the globe, hiding in every shadow. The Legion has since expanded into some other areas. They were originally meant to provide One with all the resources possible when he did eventually return, but I'm not so sure that's what it is anymore. We run major corporations, we have people in every government, but only my brother was concerned with pursuing The Legion's original goal. He devoted his life to the cause. He created all of you in One's image." Mallory looked around the room at Nine, Ten and Eleven. "Since Eleven opened the gate, we now have a way for One to return."

"He's dead by now." Eleven said. "He would be over two thousand years old. There's no way that he's alive."

"He may not be alive as the human he was, but the rules of the Upside Down are different than here." Brenner said. "We are sure he is still alive and ready to come back to us."

"How are you going to do that?" asked Will.

"You're going to help us, Will Byers." Nine said. "You're going through

the transformation. You're far enough along that you can control the gate. You're going to open it for us and call to One."

"Why would I do that?" Will asked. He himself was getting a little angry too.

"Simple." Ten said. She pulled a gun out of her pants. "This isn't a dart gun." She pointed it straight at Eleven's head. She kept her arm straight and pointed at Eleven, but turned her head to look at Will with a maniacal smile. "Keep in mind that I'm a psychopath."

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"How long has that been here?" asked Joyce. Carter was in Will's closet having found the equipment he gave to Will and Eleven. Both Joyce and Jonathan were looking over Carter's shoulder to see what he was doing.

"About two months." Carter said. He didn't look up from the small display on the instruments.

"What is it?" Carter didn't answer. He simply scrolled through all the graphs from that night.

"There's nothing here." Carter stood up and sighed. "Did anything strange happen last night?"

"Nick wasn't here when we woke up." Jonathan said.

"Who's Nick?" asked Carter.

"He's my roommate at NYU. He's usually out of the dorm room by the time I wake up, so I didn't think about it too much at first." Carter furrowed his eyebrows and sunk deep into thought, but came up with nothing.

"I think I'm out of ideas." he announced. Joyce got really worried again and wanted to ask a lot of questions, but they heard a knock at the door. "Are you expecting anyone?"

"No." The group moved over to the door and were a little scared to open it. Carter eventually threw open the door to see a very out of breath Sarah standing on the doorstep.

"Sarah! What are you doing here?" Carter asked. He gave the girl a moment to catch her breath.

"I was already at your house. Miss Maple said you'd be here."

"But why are you here?" asked Joyce. Sarah needed to take another couple deep breaths before she could talk again. Tears started falling out of her almost frozen eyes.

"My dad... he's a member of The Legion." Carter's eyes went wide.

"Did he say where Will and El are?" he asked.

"Will and El are gone? Carter, Joyce and Jonathan nodded. "He didn't say anything about them, but he said that he's going to the lab."

"Then that's where I'm going. Joyce, I need your car." Joyce grabbed the keys from the counter and walked over to the door. Carter held out his hand for her to give them to him, but she didn't.

"No. I'm coming with." Joyce insisted. "Don't try to tell me that it's too dangerous or something. I've made up my mind and you can't change that."

"Oh, I know." Carter said. "I was going to say that I'm driving. I'm the faster one."

"Oh... OK." Joyce handed him the keys and they walked quickly out to the car.

"I want to come with." Jonathan said.

"No." said Carter while starting up the engine. "Sarah has nowhere to go. I need you to stay with her." Jonathan nodded and Carter nodded back, then walked back to Sarah. Carter reversed the car to turn it around. Once they were pointed in the right direction, he put it in drive and floored the accelerator.

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Will had been let free from his chair. Eleven was still tied down, but Nine turned her around so she could watch. Ten had taken Will's chair and sat down next to Eleven, still pointing the gun at her head.



Brenner was making preparations by the crack in the wall. She turned on bunch of instruments to record everything that was about to happen. The door to the room opened one more time.

"Sorry I'm late." Bob Leasy said as he walked in. "I was held back."

"At least you made it to the day we make history." Brenner said.

"You!" exclaimed Eleven. "You're a part of this?"

"Yes I am." he said in the same normal tone he had used before.

"Is Sarah too?" Eleven asked. She didn't know if she wanted to know the answer.

"No." Bob said. Eleven was relieved. "If it makes you feel any better, when I told her about it, she kicked me in the balls and ran away." That did make Eleven feel slightly better. "How much longer, Mallory?"

"Not much longer." Brenner assured him. "I'm almost done with setting up and then Mr. Byers can begin." She fiddled with the machines a little more.

"I'm bored." complained Ten while slouching down in her seat but not lowering the gun.

"You need to be a little more patient." Nine told her.

"Why do you have the gun?" Bob asked. Ten simply shrugged. "Give that to me, I don't trust you with it." Ten reluctantly handed over the gun. Brenner pushed a couple of buttons, flipped some switches, then just observed for a moment.

"We're ready." she announced. Ten sat up in her chair. Brenner looked at Will. "Open the gate." she demanded. "I will activate the equipment when it's open to call to One." Will was terrified. He tried to take a couple of deep breaths, then stared at the crack.

"How do I do it?" he asked.

"If you simply try, it will come to you." Brenner said. Everyone in the

room was looking intently at Will. Eleven was silently hoping that nothing happened.

Will approached the oozing crack. As he got closer to the slime, he felt the same power he felt in Carter's basement. The only difference was that this time, there was nobody telling him to stop. He got closer and closer until he was standing right in front of the crack. He stuck his fingers slowly into the slime and let its power flow through him. He summoned all his strength and to everyone's surprise, he pushed open the crack. Brenner's mouth was hanging slightly open in amazement. She pressed a couple of buttons on the machines in front of her. Eleven could understand it as a clear message calling to One, but apparently not everyone did. Bob covered his ears.

"What the hell is all that noise?" he asked. Brenner shot him a look to tell him to shut up. Everyone watched the open gate, each feeling their own unique emotions. Eleven tried not to focus on it too much, but Nine and Ten seemed entranced by it.

There was a loud bang as the door to the room opened up behind them. Brenner, Bob and Eleven turned around to see who it was. The others stayed focused on the gate. Carter ran into the room with his gun in hand. Bob raised his gun and took a shot at Carter. He missed, hitting the window behind him. Carter raised his gun and took his own shot. It didn't miss, it hit Bob in the middle of his chest and he fell down as blood gushed from the wound. Carter ran over to Eleven and started untying her from the chair. Joyce came in the door after she heard the gunshots stop. She immediately ran up to Will.

"Will!" she said to him, shaking his shoulders as she did. "We're here! It's time to get you home!" Will slowly turned to look at his mother. He nodded. He quickly pulled his hands out of the slime and the gate suddenly snapped shut. The speed and power it closed with caused the crack to expand. Will and Joyce slowly stepped back as the crack slowly spread up the wall and to the ceiling. Carter had freed Eleven by this point and was watching along with them. Then, the first pieces started falling.

"Run!" yelled Carter. Joyce, Will and Eleven didn't have to be told a second time. All four of them ran at top speed out the door, making it out just before the entrance was blocked by rubble.

## 11. Chapter 11: The Aftermath

A/N: School has taken a bunch of my time, but I am still here and writing. I have decided to just announce that the story updates are going to be irregular, but not infrequent. Please continue to read and review. Thanks!

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Nine, Ten and Brenner were almost crushed by the rubble, but Nine and Ten used their powers to direct it away from them. The collapse stopped just before they fainted from over-using their powers. Ten fell down right in the middle of the floor, Nine caught himself and rested his back on the wall behind them. Brenner looked around to assess the situation. Only part of the ceiling fell down, but it blocked the door.

"Once you two have rested enough, you're going to have to dig us out." she said to Nine and Ten who were wiping the blood away from their noses.

"We failed." Nine said angrily. "What are we supposed to do now?"

"We're not going to give up. We just need to think of a new strategy." Brenner said as calmly as ever. None of them really paid much attention to Bob Leasy's corpse for a while. Brenner went over to it to examine it because there was nothing else for her to do. He was lying on his back and his eyes were shut. Brenner leaned in and looked directly at the wound. She wiped some of the blood away from it and was surprised with what she saw. "There's no hole." she remarked.

"What?" asked Ten.

"There's a hole through Bob's shirt, but there's no entrance wound." Brenner was about to look closer, but she was startled and jumped back when Bob's eyes opened and he took a sharp breath in. Brenner, Nine and Ten sat in shock as Bob started to get up and brush himself off.

"Jesus, Bob." Nine remarked. "How did you survive that?" Bob took another couple of deep breaths in before answering.

"Robert Leasy didn't survive that." he said, his voice was ever so slightly deeper than normal. "But I managed to get out while the gate was open. I found Robert's body. I was able to repair it and take it as my own."

"You're not Bob?" asked Nine.

"No." the talking corpse responded.

"One." Ten whispered in wonder.

"That's right, Ten." One turned over to Ten and gave a warm smile. Ten was speechless for a moment.

"You know my name?" she asked.

"Yes. I know all of you." he said while looking across all the three people around him. "I could see everything from my seat in that dark realm. I could see the whole world." Brenner slowly stood up behind him.

"I knew you survived... in some form or another." she said. "We are your legion. We are ready to do whatever you tell us."

"Do you have some big plans?" asked Ten eagerly. One simply looked over to her and smiled.

---

Elizabeth was starting to get worried. It had been hours since Carter had left with Joyce and she hadn't heard anything from him. She had tried to remain calm. She spent the day playing games and otherwise distracting Tim who really wanted to open the rest of the Christmas presents. Tim was now in his room, reading a book. The sun was starting to set and Elizabeth was starting to wonder if she could do something. Then she saw the flashing lights out the window. Blue red light filtered through the curtains in the living room. Elizabeth was curious, so she walked up to the window and pulled back the curtains. Outside the house were three police cars and about five unmarked black cars.

Tim ran down the stairs.

"There are a bunch of cars outside!" he exclaimed. "Why?"

"I don't know." said Elizabeth. She grabbed her jacket from the closet in the foyer and went outside. A man in a suit got out of one of the black cars and walked up to Elizabeth.

"You must be Elizabeth Maple." the man said.

"Yes." Elizabeth was surprised that the strange man knew her name. "Who are you?" The man pulled what looked like a big leather wallet out of his jacket, then opened it to show a badge.

"My name is Agent Matthews." Elizabeth examined the badge for a moment, it was from an organization she had never heard of. "Do you know anything about Agent Carter's whereabouts?" Elizabeth suddenly looked up at the man's face to see if he was being serious.

"Agent Carter?" she asked.

"Yes. Agent Peter Carter." Matthews said. "He called us about twenty minutes ago saying that he was in danger." A beat up old gray car turned onto the street and parked behind the group of official police and government cars. The driver's door opened and Carter got out. He started walking quickly towards Elizabeth and she started moving towards him,

"Peter, what's happening?" she asked him. "This man is saying you're some kind of secret agent. What does that mean? Tell me the truth."

"Elizabeth, I'm going to have to tell you later." Carter said.

"No. You're going to tell me now!" Elizabeth insisted. "Are you a secret agent?" Carter didn't say anything. "Have you been lying to me?"

"There's a lot to explain but I can't right now. I still have a lot to do." Elizabeth started to walk away. "Where are you going?"

"Home." she said without turning her head to look at Carter. Carter walked quickly to catch up with her.

"You can't go home. It's important that you come with us."

"Are you going to tell me the truth right now?"

"No. I can't. But I promise I will." Elizabeth sped up and kept walking away. Carter stopped in his tracks as she turned the corner and went out of sight. Carter was devastated and he couldn't do anything. He barely noticed when Eleven ran past him and turned the corner to go after Elizabeth.

"Miss Maple!" she called. "Miss Maple!"

"Go away, Elle." Elizabeth said through tears. "This isn't your problem."

"Yes it is." Eleven said. "It's important that you listen to me!" Elizabeth didn't listen, she just kept walking, then suddenly stopped. She tried to pick her foot up off the ground, but found it was stuck in place. Her whole body was stuck in place. Eleven walked up next to Elizabeth.

"Why can't I move?" Elizabeth asked. She still sounded sad, but afraid as well.

"Because I'm not letting you." Eleven said while wiping her nose.

"How are you doing this?"

"That's a long story that I will tell at another time. But there are a couple of things you need to know now." Elizabeth didn't say anything, but she listened. "The reason Carter kept you in the dark is because he knew that if you knew what he really was, it would just put you in danger. He couldn't bring himself to do that."

"Then why is it OK for me to know now?"

"That's another long story. Basically, you're in danger whether or not you know what he is and he wants to move you some place safe." Elizabeth suddenly was able to move again. "I'm letting you go and I'm about to walk away. I just needed you to hear that." Elizabeth didn't say anything, instead she started to think hard. She didn't even watch Eleven walk back to all the police cars.

---

"Elizabeth!" Carter exclaimed, running over as she came back around the corner. "You came back."

"I'm still not happy, but I'll come with." she said. Carter realized that it would take some time to make things right with her.

"I understand." he said solemnly. "I'm going to have you go with Agent Matthews." Carter indicated over to his colleague who was already holding a car door open for Elizabeth. She didn't say anything as she got in the car. Carter tried not to focus on Elizabeth so much. He had a lot of work to do.

"El, Joyce and Will." he called. "Get in that car." he pointed to a car on the other side of the street. "Could you guys take Tim too?"

"We'd be glad to." Joyce said.

"They'll take you to the base and you'll be safe."

"What about Jonathan and Sarah?" Joyce asked.

"I'm on my way now to get them." Carter pulled his car keys out of the pocket in his jacket. "I'm going to send some people to pick up everyone else that could be in danger because of The Legion." Joyce nodded and took her kids to the waiting car. Carter gave some orders, and the whole group of cars began driving away. Some cars were going directly to the base in Indianapolis, others were going to pick some more people up. The only person that was left was Carter. He sighed and got into his BMW, started it up, and started driving to the Byers' house.

---

"I'm scared." Sarah said. She hadn't said much during the day. Jonathan had tried to make conversation with her a couple times to take her mind off things, but she simply didn't want to talk. This was the first time she fully admitted her fear, even to herself.

"You shouldn't be." Jonathan said. "Carter will come through." He didn't entirely believe himself, but he did what he could to help Sarah. Sarah didn't really believe him either, but she didn't say anything. Both of them just sat in the living room and didn't say

anything. Jonathan felt like he should be doing more, but nothing came to mind that really would help.

Bright yellow light streamed through the front windows as a car pulled up outside the house.

"Stay here." Jonathan said to Sarah. He thought it would be best if just one person went to look. He walked slowly over to the side of the window and pushed the curtain to the side just enough so he could see what was happening outside. Once he saw Carter getting out of his blue BMW, Jonathan quickly opened the door for him. "Took you long enough." Jonathan said with a smile, trying to lighten the mood. His smile went away pretty quickly when he saw Carter's face. None of the usual amusement or whimsy was there. Sarah stood up from her chair and ran over to stand next to Jonathan.

"Is something wrong?" she asked Carter.

"I think we all might be in danger." Carter said. "Get in the car. I'll explain on the way." Neither Sarah or Jonathan said anything, they simply did what Carter said. Jonathan got in the passenger seat and Sarah sat in the back right behind him.

The only sound in the car for the next couple of miles was the roar of the engine. They were pretty far on the highway on the way to Indianapolis before Carter said anything.

"I suppose the first thing you should know is that Will and El are safe." Carter finally said, breaking the long-standing silence.

"Oh, good." Jonathan said with a sigh of relief.

"What about my dad?" Sarah asked, leaning forward closer to Carter. Carter simply stared out at the road ahead for a while before answering.

"He's not doing as well." he said after careful contemplation as to what he should say.

"What does that mean?" Sarah wasn't entirely satisfied with Carter's answer. "What happened to him?"



"He tried to kill me." Carter said. "He shot at me and missed. I shot back... and didn't miss." Sarah leaned back into her seat. She didn't say anything for a long enough time that Carter started to feel worried about her. He looked back to just see her wide-eyed and silent. "Are you OK, Sarah?" Sarah blinked quickly a couple of times.

"I don't know." she said.

"What are you feeling?" asked Jonathan. He leaned towards the center of the car and turned around to look at Sarah.

"I don't know. My picture of my dad just got turned upside down this morning so... I don't know." Jonathan turned to look at Carter. There was almost no expression on his face. Jonathan just sat back down in his seat and stayed quiet for the rest of the ride.

---

"Is everyone here?" Carter asked the woman at the front desk once they got to the Coalition base.

"Almost everyone is here." she said. "We're still waiting on one car and the team you sent to the lab. They both called in a little bit ago and said that they're on their way, they'll be here soon."

"OK. Call over to the conference room when they are."

"Sure thing." Carter turned and started walking over to the conference room for a meeting he didn't really want to have.

He opened the door to find Elizabeth sitting in one of the big leather chairs at the end of the long table.

"So... the truth?" she asked with her arms folded in front of her chest. Carter couldn't see her feet under the table, but he could hear her foot tapping against the hard concrete floor. He walked over to her end of the table and sat down in the chair right next to her.

"The truth." he said. "Ask me anything and I'll answer with the whole and honest truth." Elizabeth uncrossed her arms and rested them on the arms of the chair.

"So... you're a secret agent?"

"Yes." Elizabeth took a long time before saying anything else.

"Just... can you tell me the full story? Can you tell me a little about what's happening here?"

"You wouldn't believe me."

"I have a very open mind right now." Carter took a deep breath in as he prepared to explain all the craziness that had been going on over the past couple of years. He told the story of what really happened when Will went missing. He told her how he came into the picture and about their whole last year ending in the showdown with Ten. Finally, he told her about everything that had been happening that year. From the strangeness with Will, to Ten's escape, to a basic picture of the events of that day. Elizabeth just sat quietly for a while to absorb everything that she had just learned. Carter gave her some time before asking; "Do you have any more questions?"

"I don't know. Is your name even 'Peter Carter'?"

"Yes. Of course. What kind of a question is that?" Carter felt a little offended, but he tried not to let it show.

"I don't know." Elizabeth looked away from Carter. "I just... I don't feel like I know you anymore."

"You knew me better than anyone even before you found out I was a secret agent. How I was around you... that's the most honest version of me I've been in years." Elizabeth looked back up at Carter's face. She saw that he wasn't angry at her for asking anything. If anything, it looked like he was angry at himself. Elizabeth just looked into his eyes for a while. A part of her felt like she was just getting to know an entirely new person, but the loudest voice in her head that she was trying to ignore was saying that he was still Carter, just with a different dimension to him. Elizabeth took a deep breath in.

"I don't know where we stand." she said, looking away from Carter. "This relationship isn't over... but I'd like to put things on hold. I'd like to have some time to think."

"Of course. Anything." Carter wasn't happy with how things turned

out, but he knew that they could have gone much worse. They sat in silence for another couple of seconds until the phone on the table rang. Carter picked it up.

"Carter." he said.

"The last three cars are here." the voice of the woman at the front desk came through.

"Thanks. I'm on my way." He hung up the phone then turned to Elizabeth. "Just stay here for now." he said. "You should be a part of this meeting."

---

"Do you want to talk?" Jonathan asked Sarah. They were sitting in a big waiting room near the entrance to the base. There were some comfortable chairs, couches, a table and a coffee machine among some other pretty normal waiting room stuff.

"I don't know." Sarah said. That seemed to be becoming her favorite phrase. Jonathan felt like he should be doing more.

"If you won't decide, I will." he said. Sarah looked up at him. She was curious as to what he was about to do. "Tell me about your dad. Don't come to any conclusions, just tell me about him." Sarah took a deep breath.

"I don't know. He was always good. He was always there for me." Sarah tried to think more about what she thought about what her father had been like for her whole life, but only thoughts of earlier that day kept coming. "But then he used me to get to Eleven." A couple of tears started falling from Sarah's eyes. "And he tried to kill Carter. I don't know anything about what he is... was." She just collapsed crying. Jonathan wasn't sure what he was supposed to do, so just let her be.

Will, Joyce and Eleven sat on one of the big couches on the other side of the room. Will's breathing quickened.

"It's OK, Will. Everything's OK." Joyce said as she hugged her son close. Eleven sat next to them and set her hand on Will's shoulder to

let him know that she was there for him too. Will wasn't crying. He wasn't doing much of anything. He had said a few simple things on the car ride over, but for the most part, he was just silent.

"No, everything's not OK." Will said.

"Yes it is." Joyce said, looking into Will's eyes to really get through to him. "You're safe now. Those people that took you, they can't get to you here." Will looked away from his mom, instead turning his head a little bit to look at Eleven. She stared back at him with caring eyes, then he looked away to just stare at the wall.

"It's not them I'm worried about." he said. Joyce didn't get a chance to ask what that meant. The door opened and Carter stuck his head in.

"Everyone's here." he said. "We're meeting in the conference room."

---

It was a tight squeeze to get everyone in the conference room. Two of the last three cars to arrive brought Dustin, Lucas, Lucy, Amy, Nancy and Mike. The last car was filled with Coalition agents that were sent to the Hawkins National Laboratory to investigate. Everyone from Hawkins was in the conference room as well as a bunch of Coalition agents.

"What did you find?" Carter asked the leader of the team that had just gotten back from the lab.

"Nothing." the agent replied.

"What do you mean 'nothing'?"

"We found a bunch of rubble and some crushed electronics, but nothing else."

"There wasn't anybody there?"

"No, but there was a path to the door cleared through the rubble." Carter sighed.

"I was pretty certain they survived, but I can't believe they got out so quickly." The team of agents that went to the lab had been sent with

equipment to capture Nine and Ten if they could. Carter had been standing for the whole meeting. He didn't think he could sit down with everything going through his mind. "El and Will, can you tell us a little about what happened at the lab before we got there?" Eleven looked over to Will who was just staring at the table. Once it became clear that he wasn't going to say anything, she started talking.

"Jonathan's roommate isn't actually Nick." Jonathan was surprised by this.

"Who is he?" he asked.

"Nine." The room went dead silent. Nobody really wanted to say anything, but Eleven eventually went on further with the story. "He's Ten's twin brother and they're working with Dr. Brenner's sister. They're all part of The Legion." Carter didn't say anything, but his expression indicated to Eleven that she should keep going. She told them what she knew about The Legion, and One, and almost everything that happened to them under the lab. She left out the part about Will being the Demogorgon's successor, she felt like she should leave it up to Will to say that.

A couple of the Coalition agents took notes while Eleven talked, but everyone else just listened intently. When Eleven was finally done, everyone took a moment to think, then turned to Carter to see what he had to say.

"I'm putting as much of The Coalition's resources as we can spare on this." he started. "We're going to put a bunch more agents in Hawkins, as well as with you two." Carter said to Nancy and Jonathan who were sitting next to each other.

"Can I just ask one question?" asked Joyce.

"Go ahead." Carter said. He was going to make the joke that 'she had already asked one question', but he figured it wasn't the right time.

"Why you guys?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean... why The Coalition and not... the FBI or something."

"There are a couple reasons." Carter explained. "We are already involved in this case and so we can handle it the quickest. But most of all, handing it off to the FBI would involve me going to Langley and telling them to take a case that involved telepathic children and an inter-dimensional monster. I think we are the most prepared to deal with this right now." Joyce nodded. "Any more questions?" Carter asked the whole room. It took a while, but Sarah timidly raised her hand.

"What am I supposed to do?" she asked. "I mean... I have no house and no family."

"You can come and live with me and Tim." Carter said almost instantly. "At least until all of this is over." Everybody looked around to see if anyone else was going to speak up, but nobody did. "OK, then. I don't know exactly where we're headed, but I know that we can face it head on."

## 12. Chapter 12: The Council

A very important meeting took place in a very secret room. Even though the room didn't have any windows and was one of the most secure rooms in the world, it wasn't uncomfortable. It had some nice red carpet to go along with the red wallpaper. It was well lit, but still dim and artistic. It seemed powerful and important. The most important part however was the big octagonal table in the middle surrounded by eight identical leather chairs. Sitting in each of those chairs were the leaders of The Legion, called into an emergency meeting.

"Thank you all for coming on such a short notice." Mallory Brenner said to begin the meeting. She looked around at the other seven people at the table. They were some of the most powerful and most scary people in the world. "I'd like to talk to you about our organization's original purpose."

"Not this again." said the man opposite to Brenner. He was Damien Morley, CEO of a massive international conglomerate corporation. "I was against letting you onto this council after your brother died for this exact reason. We're a different entity than we were when we were founded." Mallory got a little angry at this.

"My brother was the only one of you that was really loyal to what this organization is supposed to be."

"Your brother was crazy and it's time you realized that." Morley snapped. Everyone else except for Brenner didn't say anything, but nodded in agreement. "Look at the plans we have for our future. We stand to become the new world monarchs and you're giving that up to chase a 2000 year old legend."

"The whole reason we have those opportunities is because we were created to be One's army when he returns."

"Listen to yourself! 'One' is a myth. He wasn't and isn't real. Now think about the profit we could make for ourselves if you would just let it go!" Brenner opened her mouth to fight back, but the room's one door squeaked open. She turned around to see One walk in, wearing

a new tailored suit.

"I thought you were just going to listen." she said to the being controlling Bob Leasy's dead body.

"I was, but I've heard everything I need to." Morley stood up, his face filled with a fiery fury.

"Listen here, Leasy. You might be a member of this council some day, but right now you're not." he said. "You need to learn your place."

"No, Damien." One said. Morley was suddenly forced rapidly back down into his seat by an invisible hand. "It's time you learned *your* place." One walked around the table until he was right next to Morley's chair. He crouched down and leaned in so his mouth was right next to Morley's ear. "Two thousand years, I waited. Every day in that torturous shadow realm felt as if I were both living and dying at the same time."

"One." Morley whispered. He was feeling something he had never felt before: fear. True fear.

"That's right." One said. "I saw everything from in there. I saw what this organization was originally meant to be, then I saw the abomination it has become. This meeting was supposed to be your one last chance to redeem yourselves in my eyes, but you've failed." One stood up so he was towering over Morley. Morley was breathing rapidly and his eyes were wide.

"I'm sorry. Please forgive me." he pleaded.

"This meeting was supposed to be your last chance" One said. "But if you ask nicely I might just forgive you."

"I'm sorry. Please." Morley was terrified.

"One more time." One said.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorr..." There was an audible crack as Morley's head suddenly snapped to the side to an unnatural angle. Morley collapsed to the table, dead.



"I forgive you." One said, wiping a small drip of blood from his nose. He picked up Morley's body by the shirt collar and dropped it off to the side. He sat down in the chair that the now dead man had sat in. Everyone else at the table stared at the now sitting One, some had their mouths open in horror.

"I believe..." one man off to the side started to say. "That I speak for everyone when I say: we are your legion. We will follow you anywhere." One smiled.

"Thank you for the sentiment, James." he said. "But I think that all of you except for Mallory proved yourselves unworthy of that honor." The other members of the council looked at One in fear. He didn't do anything for a while. At least, it seemed like he didn't do anything. The six people at the sides of the table started bleeding out of their eyes, then they all fell onto the table. Dead. Like Morley. Only One and Brenner remained. Brenner looked around at her dead colleagues. She didn't feel sorrow or remorse for any of them. One took a moment to straighten the cuffs of his new dress shirt. "Nine, Ten!" he called. "I know you two have been listening. Come in here. No need to be afraid." The door opened about ten seconds later and Nine and Ten came through. "Sorry about the mess, but take a seat." Nine carefully picked up one of the bodies and set it down on the floor. Ten pulled out one of the chairs and simply tilted it over to dump the body out of it. "The four of us will be the new council." One announced. "With all of The Legion's resources, nothing will be able to stop us."

---

Winter break was drawing to a close, so Jonathan and Nancy had to go back to college. They knew that there were Coalition agents all around them, but never knew exactly where. Nancy did however that the same black Mercedes followed her all the way on the drive back to Michigan. Jonathan didn't notice anything at the time, but when Nancy mentioned it to him over the phone later, he did remember seeing something similar.

Will and Eleven didn't really seem the same after the ordeal. Everybody understood that, but that didn't mean that they had to be happy about it. Mike was the least happy about it, so he called a meeting in his basement. Everyone except Will and Eleven attended.

"They've been through a lot." Dustin said from the couch. "I think we should just let them be." Amy leaned on his shoulder and rubbed his arm a little, indicating that she agreed. Mike had been sitting in a chair, but he stood up because he couldn't sit still.

"I know that they've been through a lot. I don't want to ask them to forget that." he said while pacing around near the blanket fort at the side of the room. "I just... I just want El back."

"What do you mean?" Lucy asked from one of the other chairs. "El is back. She's at home."

"That's not what I meant." Mike stopped and leaned up against the wall to think about what he did mean. "It's... she doesn't seem like... her. Will doesn't either. Well... of course Will doesn't seem like her. She is the only person that could seem like her. Unless of course..." Lucas noticed that Mike was starting to ramble.

"We get what you mean." he said.

"I just... I want our friends back." Mike said. "I want things to be like they were. I know that they aren't, but we could pretend that they are." There was a long pause.

"What do you want to do?" asked Amy.

"I just want to... I think we all need something to make us feel a little better right now."

"Do you actually know what you want to do?"

"No, not really."

"I think I have some ideas." Amy said. Mike smiled. He was happy to have someone on his side.

---

Will and Eleven showed up at Mike's house that night. They didn't really know why they had been called over, but they decided to go anyway. When they asked Joyce to drive them over, she thought it was a great idea. She too thought that Will and Eleven should at least try not to think about The Legion for a little bit and have some fun. Joyce dropped them off and smiled while saying goodbye. If she was

being honest, she was scared out of her mind with everything that had been happening around them, but she tried to put on a brave face for her children. Eleven rang the doorbell, Will just looked down at the ground.

"Are you OK?" she asked him.

"Yeah. I'm fine." he said.

"You can still go home if you're not comfortable. Mom's still here."

"I'm fine." The door opened and Karen greeted them.

"Hello." she said warmly. "The rest of the kids are downstairs."

"Thank you, Mrs. Wheeler." Eleven said with a smile. Will looked up and gave a small smile as well. They walked in and went down the stairs to the basement. The entire group was already there. They all smiled at Will and Eleven when they came down, but Eleven could tell that something was off. "What's up, guys?" she asked.

"We were talking today and we wanted to tell you what we came up with." Amy said.

"We know that you guys just went through a lot." Mike said. "But if you think about it, there's nothing we can do right now. The Coalition is working on it and they'll get that done. But right now, we think it would be best if you thought about something else." Eleven looked over to Will. He didn't say anything, but she could see that he was paying close attention and slowly nodding.

"What do you have in mind?" Eleven asked.

"We're going to suggest that we only talk about The Legion and The Coalition in our meetings with Carter and when we need to." Amy said. "There's no sense dwelling on it." Eleven nodded to indicate her agreement. "Secondly: we're going to try to just have some fun. Starting now." Eleven smiled.

"I'm looking forward to it." she said.

---

They got started immediately having fun. Sarah, Amy and Lucy didn't know how to play Dungeons and Dragons, so they decided to play some other board games. They later got into a very energetic and very loud game of charades. Eleven was overjoyed when Will got into the game and seemed to forget all of their troubles, if only for an hour. The fishbowl with all the papers of charades topics got empty pretty quickly, so they all wrote some more and refilled it.

"I'm going upstairs to get some more food if we're going to be at this for a while longer." Mike said.

"OK." said a couple of people at once while they thought of funny and difficult words to write on their little cards. Mike started heading up the stairs and nobody, including him, really noticed when Eleven ran up after him. Mike grabbed a bag of chips from the pantry and turned around to see a smiling Eleven right behind him.

"Hey!" he said. He was surprised, but glad to see her.

"Hey." said Eleven. "I know that this was your idea."

"We all came up with it." he insisted.

"Don't be like this."

"Like what?"

"So... humble." 'Humble' was a word that Eleven had learned from English class with Miss Maple. She thought it accurately described what Mike was being.

"Fine. I asked everyone to come over to talk about what we could do for you two. Are you happy?"

"Yes." Eleven said very quickly. "I am very happy. I have the best boyfriend in the world." Eleven stood up on her toes a little bit and gave Mike a big kiss on the lips, then ran back down the stairs.

---

It had gotten late and Karen had offered to drive Will and Eleven home when they were finally done. She got them to their house, said goodbye, then drove back home. Will and Eleven just stood in the

darkness for a moment.

"You didn't tell them." Will said through the silence.

"What?" asked Eleven.

"You didn't tell anyone. About what Brenner said about me. That I'm turning into the Demogorgon. We made it out of there... but that's still happening."

"I figured... that you need to tell them. I think you should, but that's your decision."

---

School started back up. The everyday routine helped everyone get back a sense of normalcy. Eleven remembered what they talked about at Mike's house and tried not to think too much about The Legion and what happened to them at the lab on Christmas outside of their meetings with Carter. Everyone was particularly excited for their meeting the first day back from the break. After class was finally over, Carter locked the door and turned around. He yawned and rubbed his eyes.

"I am so tired." he announced. He walked right past the stool he usually sat on during their meetings and instead collapsed into his desk chair. "I have been working almost non-stop to get Coalition agents and resources where they need to be."

"I can confirm that." Sarah said. "He's been working at home a lot too."

"How have things been going with you living with Carter?" asked Eleven.

"Pretty good." Sarah said. "He's awesome when he's not working."

"Thanks, Sarah." Carter said. "I think everything is where it needs to be, so the amount of work I do at home should go down a little." Sarah smiled a little.

"So... where are the Coalition agents in Hawkins?" Lucas asked.

"There are a bunch at the lab, some working with Chief Hopper and a bunch just in different places around town. There are so many Coalition agents in Hawkins right now that we bought another house on the other side of town to use as a mini-base."

There was a knock at the door. Carter looked over to the door, then at the kids, then back at the door. Nobody said anything, but it was apparent on their faces that none of them had any idea who it was. Carter stood up and unlocked the door. He found himself looking at Elizabeth.

"Hi." she said.

"Hi, Eli... Miss Maple." Carter said. "What are you doing here?"

"I know you have these meetings. I want to be a part of it." Carter just stood and stared at her for a while. He shook his head quickly as if to wake himself up.

"Yeah, of course." He stood out of the way and opened the door a little farther. "Come on in."

"Thanks." Elizabeth.

---

At lunch, everyone tried their hardest to leave all their feelings from the meeting back in the classroom and just act normal. But that was harder than they thought it would be. Everyone just silently sat picking at their food. Mike was the first to dare to look up from his food. He scanned the faces of everyone in the group, but something further away caught his eye.

"Oh, no." he said. A couple others looked up.

"What is it?" Dustin asked. Mike simply pointed. Everyone followed his finger to see Troy and James getting ever closer to their table.

"They haven't messed with us all school year." Lucas said. "I honestly thought they moved away."

"Obviously they haven't." Mike said. They couldn't do anything but watch as the two idiots neared closer to their table.

"Hey, losers." Troy said when he got there.

"Hello Troy." Mike said. "I honestly thought you had finally grown up enough to let us go."

"Apparently not." James said with a small laugh. He didn't hear that he had just denied that they had grown up. Troy walked over to the end of the table where the girls were sitting and put his arms on Lucy and Amy's shoulders as he leaned in.

"What are you girls doing hanging out with these losers?" he asked.

"They're some of our best friends." Amy said while pushing Troy's arm off her shoulder. Troy laughed a little.

"Really? Your friends?" Troy laughed a little as if he had just made a good joke. Which he hadn't. "You know... a couple of you are probably pretty enough to come sit with us."

"Wow. I'm so flattered." Lucy said. The sarcasm in her voice was completely lost on Troy and James. Troy stood up and simply smiled at the girls, trying to act smooth. But suddenly, his smile started disappearing and it seemed like he was choking, getting the attention of some people at other tables. He suddenly turned around and threw up all over James. James immediately went through the same motions and threw up all over Troy. The whole cafeteria erupted into screams of "Ew!" and "Gross!". A couple of people started laughing. Mike turned around to look at the expressions of everyone sitting at the table with him. Almost all of them looked surprised. The only one that didn't was Eleven. She noticed that Mike was looking at her. She wiped the small drop of blood off her nose and she and Mike shared a sly smile at the secret that they shared.

---

"El! You've got to help me!" Will said as he shook her awake. It was still very dark outside. Eleven didn't look at her clock or question Will as to why he was waking her up at such an hour. She simply turned on the lamp on her bedside table. She looked up to Will to see that his face was red and streaked with tears.

"Did it happen again?" she asked. Will nodded and wiped his nose,

trying his hardest not to outright cry. Eleven lifted up her blanket and started to get out of bed. "I'll help clean up."

"It's worse this time." Will said.

"Will we not be able to get done by dawn?"

"Defiantly not." He didn't say anything more, he just waved his arm to tell Eleven to come with him. When they got to his room, Eleven noticed that it was much colder than the rest of the house. She crossed her arms to try to stay warm. At first, she thought it was colder because of some sinister Upside-Down based reason, but then she noticed that there was a hole in the wall where Will's window was supposed to be.

"What happened?" she asked. Will sat down on his bed and buried his face in his hands.

"The monster... it was hungry." He sniffled a little bit. "It wanted to go after whatever was closest. It wanted to go after you and mom." Eleven sat down next to Will and rested her hand on his shoulder to try to help him get through this a little. "I forced it to go into the forest and eat a deer instead."

"You... I mean it... at a whole deer?" Eleven asked.

"Is it important?"

"It might be." Eleven took a deep breath in and tried to think of a plan. "Let's clean up what we can around here." she suggested. "You can tell mom in the morning about the broken window, we don't want you to freeze for the rest of winter. Then... we need to tell Carter. About everything."

---

A/N: Still hard at work writing, but I have run into a little problem. I am still working out in my head how the rest of the story is going to go. I know how it's going to end and I've even started writing some pieces of the resolution, but I still don't know everything that's going to happen in the next chapter. If you have any ideas, leave them in a review along with your thoughts on this chapter and the story so far.



If you have some good ideas and they fit into how the story is going to end, I'll certainly take them. Again, thanks for reading.

## 13. Chapter 13: The Scientist

Mallory sat down at the big CEO's desk at MHI headquarters in Boston. MHI stood for Morley Holdings Incorporated, it was Damien Morley's company. He was the CEO and his name was on the company, but the vast majority of the stock was held by The Legion, so One was in control of it now. Mallory tried to be confident and comfortable where she was, but she simply wasn't. For her whole life, she had worked in the shadows. She had worked with numbers and science, all things she easily understood. But in the last couple of weeks, One had thrown her into the unknown world of deception and manipulation. He had come with her and was standing just behind the big leather chair that Mallory was sitting in. He still hadn't told anyone his plans entirely. Just small pieces here and there. She tried to find some indication on his face to what they were going to do in the end. He looked back down at her and simply nodded to let her know that she was doing well.

The big wooden door on the other end of the room opened up and a man in a white lab coat came through. He quickly took a couple of steps forward, but then stopped in his tracks when he saw who was sitting behind the desk.

"Where's Mr. Morley?" he asked.

"Mr. Morley won't be joining us today." Mallory said. She was still uncomfortable, but she was satisfied with how that came out of her mouth, so she continued. "Please take a seat." she said, motioning towards the slightly smaller leather chair on the other side of the desk. The man squirmed around a little bit when he did get into the chair. "You are Wallace Anderson, head researcher with MHI's bio-engineering division, correct?"

"Um... yeah." Wallace said. It seemed as though he was even a little scared.

"You were also Dr. Martin Brenner's roommate and lab partner at Yale, correct." Mallory asked. Her eyes pierced into Wallace. She was doing a good job at seeming confident.

"Yeah, that's me." Wallace said. He kept glancing up at One.

"What do you know of Dr. Brenner's work?"

"I know that he was looking into some strange stuff." Wallace settled down a little bit as he sunk into his thoughts. "But I must admit, I was pretty interested in it too back then. I remember Marty once tried to get approval to do some research on telepathy and... other dimensions. His proposal was turned down of course." Wallace took a deep breath and thought some more. "I remember that right when we were about to graduate, he told me some story. It was... something about ancient Rome and a monster and..." he paused as he tried to think more about the story. "...and about bringing some guy back from the dead. He very passionately asked me to join him after school but I turned him down. He had just turned too crazy for me."

"What makes you say that?" asked One, talking for the first time. Wallace smiled and laughed a little.

"Because the story was crazy but it seemed like he would pursue it to the ends of the earth."

"What if I told you that it wasn't just some crazy story?" One asked. He set his hands on the desk and leaned in. "What if I told you that all of it was true?"

"I would probably think you're crazy." Wallace started to laugh. Suddenly, his chair flew back and hit the wall. Wallace rose up out of the chair and hung in mid-air. His breathing sped up and he desperately looked around the room to find some explanation for what was happening to him. One went around the desk and stood in front of him.

"Do you think I'm crazy now?" One asked very calmly.

"How are you doing this?" Wallace asked.

"What do you think? Think about what Martin told you." Wallace was silent for a moment.

"You're that guy... from the story!"

"Exactly. I am One." Wallace fell back down into his chair. One wiped the small drop of blood from his nose.

"What do you want from me?" Wallace was terrified. If Mallory was honest, she wasn't that far from terror either, but she didn't let it show.

"I want you to continue Martin's work." One said.

"He obviously got it right. You're back. Why don't you ask him?"

"Martin died over two years ago. Plus... I don't need you to get me back. I need you to use some other pieces of his work." Wallace gulped.

"Why... why would I do that?" he stuttered.

"Because, you could become one of the most powerful men in the world." One said. "But probably more important to you; I won't kill you if you help us."

---

"How did the window break?" Joyce asked in the morning. She was very confused.

"I honestly don't know." Will lied. "I just woke up and... it was broken." Joyce looked at the shards of glass on Will's floor. He and Eleven had moved the big pieces of glass inside the house during the night to make it look like the window had been broken from the outside. There was a little voice in the back of Joyce's mind telling her that something was off, but she didn't listen to it.

"OK." Joyce stood up. "I have the day off today. I'll call someone to fix it." Will glanced down at his watch.

"OH!" he exclaimed. "We have to go." Eleven heard him from the kitchen where she was eating breakfast. She glanced up at the clock and quickly shoveled a couple more spoonfuls of cereal into her mouth before running to her room to get her coat.

"What do you mean you have to go?" asked Joyce. "It's only about 7." Will was already getting his coat and backpack from his room.

"We don't want to be late. Bye mom." Joyce opened her mouth to ask some more questions, but the front door had already closed behind Will and Eleven.

---

"Has anyone seen my keys?" Carter asked while searching through all the couch cushions. He usually liked to leave really early to get to school and he was running a little late that day.

"They were on the living room floor yesterday. I put them on the coffee table." Sarah called from the kitchen. Carter spun around to see his keys neatly lying on the coffee table. "Did you really not think to look there?" Sarah asked.

"Honestly, no." Carter walked into the kitchen. Sarah was frying an egg and Tim was eating some toast. "I was up late last night working on Coalition... stuff." There was no word that accurately and quickly described all the work he had to do for The Coalition that night.

"Heard anything?" Sarah asked while dumping her egg from the pan onto a plate.

"There are a couple of possible leads. Nothing for sure." Carter said while getting on his coat. "I have to go. Bye!"

"Bye, Carter!" Sarah called while sitting down to eat her breakfast.

"Bye, Dad!" Tim called. A couple of crumbs of toast flew out of his mouth.

The door closed behind Carter and Sarah was left alone with Tim. They hadn't talked too much since Sarah moved in. They weren't trying to be cold towards each other or anything, they just didn't have too much to talk about.

"So..." Sarah said, trying to start a conversation. "You have powers like El?" she asked.

"Yeah." Tim said while buttering a new slice of toast.

"What can you do?" Sarah was feeling a little awkward with everything she was asking. Tim didn't say anything. Instead, the tub

of butter next to him floated up and started moving across the kitchen. The refrigerator door magically opened itself and the butter found its normal place on the top shelf. "That's pretty cool." Sarah said.

"Yeah." Tim said. "But I can't do it anywhere but here." Sarah smiled a little.

"Do you know why?" she asked.

"Dad said it's for my safety." Tim said.

"Yeah, that's probably true. But there's another reason too." Tim looked up at Sarah.

"What?" he asked, a little excited.

"Because everyone would be jealous of you."

"Really?"

"Yes, of course. I'm honestly a little jealous of you. But I still think that you're super cool."

"Thanks, Sarah." Tim said. "I like you." Sarah didn't say anything after that. She just smiled and continued eating her breakfast.

---

"Why isn't he here yet?" asked Will impatiently. He and Eleven were at the door to the chemistry room, but it was locked. They had knocked on it a couple of times, but they were confident that he wasn't there. Eleven thought for a moment then snapped her fingers. Well... she tried to snap her fingers, she couldn't get it quite right.

"He starts his day off at the high school." Eleven remembered. Will nodded and they started to run in the direction of the high school. One teacher yelled "no running" when they ran past him, but they thought this was enough of an emergency that they could break a couple of rules.

The high school was right next to the middle school, so it wasn't long before they were there. They ran through the open door to see Carter sitting at his desk working on grading some tests. There were a

couple of students that were already there, sitting in the front rows. Carter looked up when he heard some out of breath people run at full speed into his classroom.

"What are you two doing here so early?" he asked. Eleven wanted to start immediately with an explanation of what Brenner had said about Will, but she wanted to get the other students out of there first.

"We need to talk to you..." Eleven tried to think of a good lie. "...about our grades. In private." Carter nodded slowly to indicate that he had gotten the message. He stood up and turned to address the other students.

"Sorry but I need to talk to these guys in private. Could you guys please wait outside? Thanks." The high school students in the room lethargically got up and left the room. Carter locked the door behind them. "What's up?" Eleven turned to Will.

"Are you going to tell him or should I?" she asked. Will just stared at the white tiled floor, not saying a word. Eleven looked back up at Carter. "I'll tell you then." She told him everything she knew. She told him the real reason that Will's room was a mess that day after school. She told them about what Brenner told them about Will being the Demogorgon's successor and finally she told them about what had happened to Will the previous night.

"I honestly don't know what to say or do." Carter said when she was done. The school bell rang to let them know that it was time to start getting to class. "You guys should probably head back to the middle school. I will tell you as soon as I know something."

---

A month and a half went by and Carter still didn't know anything about Will's situation. They didn't discuss the details of it at any of their mid-day meetings with Carter after chemistry class because Will made it obvious that he wasn't comfortable with everyone knowing it.

"The Coalition thinks that they've found Brenner, Nine and Ten." Carter announced one day. "They're currently in Boston, but from what we can tell, they're getting ready to travel somewhere."

"Where?" asked Lucas.

"We have no idea. But we're going to follow them." Carter said. He waited a little bit to give anyone else some time to say something if they wanted to. Nobody said anything. "That's all I have for today. Have fun at lunch." The children smiled and said goodbye as they left. Carter liked that they were trying to stay positive despite everything around them.

Carter turned around to see that Elizabeth had stayed behind.

"Can we talk?" she asked.

"Of course." Carter said.

"I wanted to talk to you about our relationship." Elizabeth said. Carter had both been waiting for and dreading this conversation. He really had no idea where it would go.

"OK." Carter said.

"I want to take our relationship off hold and start back up again." The only thing that had been going through Carter's mind was that Elizabeth was going to break up with him. He was pleasantly surprised at what he heard. Carter didn't say anything, which Elizabeth took as a cue to keep talking. "When I first learned... what you actually do for a living, I couldn't get it out of my mind that you were somebody completely unknown to me. But... seeing you here in these meetings. I saw you being... you, but being honest. I saw the real Peter Carter and I'm happy with what I saw." Carter smiled.

"Would you like to come over tonight?" Carter asked. "You could stay the night and we can start the weekend off tomorrow with waffle morning like we used to." As soon as the words came out of his mouth, he knew that his suggestion was a long shot. They had just started things up again and he wasn't sure as to the speed that Elizabeth wanted to re-engage with him.

"I would like that." Elizabeth said with a smile. They leaned across the desks in front of them and pulled each other into a hug.

---



Lucy got home from school that day to find both of her parents sitting on the couch waiting in the living room. She called them her parents, but her mom and dad had gotten divorced when she was seven. Her mom and dad weren't angry at each other, they just realized they would be happier if they weren't together. Her dad had moved to Louisville. She didn't spend much time with him, but she usually lived with him for about a month in the summer. Her mom on the other hand stayed in Hawkins had married a man named Stan who worked for some big company in Indianapolis. She liked Stan, but she didn't call him her dad.

Her mom only worked part-time, so it was pretty normal for her to be at home when Lucy got home, but Stan usually worked really late. It was strange that he was home so early.

"What's up, guys?" Lucy asked.

"Sit down, Lucy." her mom said with a soft smile. Lucy sat down, but was scared for whatever was going to come next.

"Is something wrong?" Lucy asked.

"On the contrary." said Stan with another soft, somewhat suspicious smile. He took a deep breath before speaking again. "I got offered a big promotion today. I'll be in charge of a bunch of people, there's a big pay increase that comes with it, and it's some work I've wanted to do for a long time." Lucy smiled too.

"That's great, Stan. Good for you." Lucy really wanted to be happy for her step-dad, but something in the back of her mind told her to wait until the other shoe drops.

"The only thing is that we're going to have to move to San Francisco. Now, I've called some real estate agents around here and..."

"Wait... you would have to move to California?" Lucy asked.

"Well, yes." Stan continued. "We would have to move to San Francisco. I did a little bit of research and found out that we can afford a nice apartment in the middle of the city with a great view of the golden gate bridge." Lucy just sat wide eyes, so many thoughts

were running through her head.

"I don't want to do that." she said.

"Now Lucy, think about Stan. This is a great opportunity for him that probably won't come up again." Lucy's mom said.

"I don't know anybody there." Lucy argued.

"You'll make new friends when you get there. You'll be starting high school. It's a great time to make new friends."

"But I don't want new friends." Lucy's voice got noticeably louder. "I already have friends here. Good friends."

"Now Lucy... Try to at least look at some of the good things that can come from this." Stan said.

"Do I have any say at all in this?" Lucy asked.

"Well... I've already accepted the job." Stan said. Lucy stood up from her chair and marched up the stairs to her room, tears starting to come from her eyes. "Lucy!" Stan called. "Can we please talk about this?" He started to walk towards the stairs, but Lucy's mom stopped him.

"Leave her, Stan." she said. "She'll come down when she's ready."

---

Lucy laid on her bed for a really long time. Until it was dark out. There was a little voice in her head that told her that this was a really great opportunity for Stan and that she shouldn't be so selfish. But she drowned that voice out with all the others. She didn't want to move. She didn't want new friends. New friends wouldn't understand the time she was attacked in the school library by a person with telepathic powers. New friends wouldn't understand the night she spent in a secret underground base because a powerful evil organization might have been after them. Only her friends in Hawkins would ever understand those things.

At about ten o'clock, Lucy made a decision that she had never made in her life. She got up off her bed and threw on her coat. She got a

flashlight off her desk, opened her window, and carefully climbed out into the cool March air. It was a little hard getting off the roof, but she was able to climb down from the garage onto the garbage cans, then to the ground. Lucy sneaked over to the living room window and carefully looked in. She could see the back of Stan's and her mother's heads. They were watching TV. Lucy turned away, took a deep breath in, and started walking.

Lucy had never run away before. She had never even considered it. Because of this, she really had no idea where she should go. She simply walked without really paying attention to where she was going. After a while, Lucy looked around and saw that she had ended up in the middle of the woods. She turned on her flashlight and started looking around. She knew where she was and how to get back home, but she really just wanted to stay there for a little while. She sat down on a stump and took the opportunity to do some uninterrupted thinking, away from her mom and Stan.

The uninterrupted thinking didn't last for long. Lucy heard something fall not too far away. It wasn't just a leaf or a pine cone, it was something much bigger. The curiosity in her took over, she had to know what it was. She got up and started walking in the general direction of the sound that she had heard. She walked for about a minute, and assumed that she was getting pretty close. Suddenly, the light in the flashlight began to flicker. Lucy hit it against her hand a couple of times, but it just went out. She took about three steps more before she saw it. She could only see the head of the deer, but she assumed that there was a whole deer attached to it. But sitting over the deer was something else. The thing looked like a naked human in the darkness of the night, but it also looked like it was eating the deer raw.

Something clicked in Lucy's mind. Her heartbeat rose and she started slowly walking backwards when she realized that the creature eating the deer matched Eleven's description of the Demogorgon. Lucy just wanted to get away, but she didn't notice the stick behind her. It wasn't the kind of stick that she could break by stepping on it and make some noise, it was much bigger than that. Instead, Lucy tripped and fell on her back. She looked up. The monster turned its head and she could see it's entire face was just an open mouth with teeth

everywhere. The monster ran straight at Lucy, it's long legs propelling it forward in leaps and bounds. It only took a couple of seconds for it to be right on top of Lucy with its many teeth only inches from her face.

Suddenly, the monster's head whipped back and it rolled over off of Lucy. Then it turned back to her, then away again. It seemed like it was at war with itself. Lucy didn't know what was happening, but she used it as a chance to run away. She got back up to her feet and ran at full speed. She didn't know where she was running, but she knew that it was away from the monster. She eventually came to a street. She stopped a moment to get her bearings and realized that she wasn't far from her house.

As soon as she got home, Lucy flung open the front door.

"Lucy! What were you doing outside?" her mom asked, standing up from the couch. Lucy simply ran over to her mother and started hugging her. Lucy let herself start to cry.

## 14. Chapter 14: The Deserter

One had selected the MHI research lab in Colorado as their base of operations. It was pretty much in the middle of nowhere and surrounded by mountains. They had taken a private jet into Colorado Springs, then cars out to the lab. Nine, Ten and Wallace were given a van that was filled to the brim with all the records they had of Martin Brenner's research. It had taken about two months to collect all of it that they had, but Wallace was confident that he had a good picture of what Dr. Brenner was working on when he died.

"Are we there yet?" Ten whined to her brother who was driving. Ten was sitting in the back with Wallace.

"Does it look like we're there yet?" a very annoyed Nine asked. Ten looked out the window.

"No." she said.

"Then just shut up. I'll tell you when we get there." Ten sighed and settled into her uncomfortable seat again. She looked out the front window again and saw the big black Cadillac that they kept following.

"Why does Brenner get to ride with One in the limo?" Ten asked. Nine didn't really want to answer, so he just kept driving and didn't say anything. Ten turned to Wallace who was sitting in the seat across from her. He had met Ten on the flight over and she frightened him, so he was just staring out the window making every effort not to make eye contact with her. Ten sighed again and realized that she wasn't going to get any entertainment for the rest of the ride.

---

The atmosphere was much different in the limo in front of the van. For the most part, One and Mallory were just silent. One didn't really have anything to say and Mallory was still slightly afraid of him.

"I never took the opportunity to properly thank you, Mallory." One said. Mallory looked over to him.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"It was because of your efforts that I am back here. You and your brother were the only people that believed in The Legion's true mission and I thank you for that. Now, everything that we do will only be possible because of those efforts." Mallory didn't really know what to say so she just stayed silent and stared out the window.

Both the car and the van pulled into the driveway for the lab. The medium sized parking lot was almost completely empty. Mallory and One got out of the limo. One looked up at the big building in front of him as if he owned the place, which he pretty much did. Nine hopped out of the van. The big sliding door on the side of it opened up and Wallace and Ten got out. Nine and Wallace walked over to One. Ten did too, but more slowly while she did some big stretches after being stuck in the back of the van.

"This isn't too far from where we grew up." Nine noticed.

"Yeah, you're right." Ten said. She looked around and eventually started pointing southeast. "The Westcliffe National Laboratory is just a little bit over there. If there weren't mountains in the way, I bet we could see it."

One didn't say anything, but he looked around, scanning the mountain tops around them. His head stopped and stared at something for a moment. He turned away after a moment, opened the front door to the building and walked inside. Everyone else followed. They walked down a bunch of dark and empty halls.

"That's strange." Wallace said under his breath.

"What is?" asked One. Wallace didn't think anyone actually heard what he had said, but he was learning not to underestimate One.

"Well... I've been here before and usually there are more people around."

"That's probably because I fired everyone." One said. He didn't stop walking and his eyes never looked away from the door at the double doors on the end of the hall. Wallace's eyes went wide in surprise.

"What? Everyone?" he asked.

"Almost everyone. The security team has been replaced with members of The Legion but I fired most of the scientists so you can work in peace.

"Why couldn't he just work in Hawkins?" Ten asked. "I mean... Dr. Brenner's research was already there and nobody ever goes to the bottom floors.

"I think that there are already Coalition agents on our trail." One said. "Plus, I've been listening in on The Coalition's radio communications and they have stationed so many agents around Hawkins that it would be stupid for us to go anywhere near there until we're ready. Which is where you come in." One looked over at Wallace.

"Do we get to hear your plans?" asked Nine.

"You get to hear part of my plans." One said. He pushed open the big double doors at the end of the hall to reveal a giant laboratory. There were four other scientists waiting in the room when they got there. "They are here to assist you, Dr. Anderson." One said to Wallace.

"May I ask... what are they to assist me with?" Wallace asked. One turned to face Wallace.

"The way I see it... there is only one thing that can stop me." he said. "You're going to help me kill it."

---

Joyce was running late on the way to work while Eleven made breakfast for herself.

"Where's my name tag?" she asked, searching frantically through the couch cushions.

"Did you check on the little table in your room?" Eleven asked.

"No. That's a good idea." Joyce ran back to her room and came back a second later. "Found it!" she announced triumphantly. She walked over and gave Eleven a hug. "I'm off to work."

"Bye, mom." Joyce started to leave but stopped halfway out the door. "Have you seen Will?" she asked.

"Not yet." Joyce walked back in and went quickly down the hall to Will's room.

"Time to get up." she said to Will who was still in bed. Will groaned.

"I feel sick again today." It had been a while since Will had to take a day off school because he was sick and Joyce had hoped that those days were behind them. She leaned down and put her hand on Will's forehead.

"It doesn't feel like you have a temperature. Are you sure you're sick?"

"Yes." Will said. "Can I please stay home today?" Joyce thought for a moment.

"Yes. That would be fine." she eventually said. "I have to go to work so you'll be home alone, but I'll call the school." Joyce walked out of Will's room and picked up the phone.

"Is he OK?" asked Eleven while Joyce was dialing.

"He's sick. It doesn't seem too bad though." Joyce held the phone up to her ear and waited for it to connect. "Hello." she said after a while. "This is Joyce Byers. I'm calling to let you know that my son Will won't be at school today. He's sick." Joyce was quiet for a minute while the person on the other end spoke. "Thank you very much." She hung up the phone.

---

Most of the students left the chemistry room, but Carter didn't lock the door yet.

"I actually have a lot to tell you today, but I'm going to wait until Elizabeth gets here." Carter said.

"Me too." Lucy said in a very small voice. Everyone looked over to see her just leaning on a desk and looking down at the ground.

"Is everything OK, Lucy?" Amy asked. "You haven't been acting like



yourself today." Lucy didn't look up. She just nervously moved her leg around a little.

"Something happened last night."

"What?" asked Eleven who was a little scared for her. Carter looked around the room with a furrowed brow. It looked like he had a question.

"Is someone not here?" he asked.

"Will's sick again." Eleven said. She and Carter, being the only ones that knew about Will's impending transformation, exchanged nods. The door opened and Elizabeth came through.

"Did I miss anything?" she asked while Carter locked the door.

"We were waiting for you to start." Carter said. He took his seat on the stool behind the big table. Usually, Elizabeth sat on one of the desks next to the kids, but this time she took another stool and sat next to Carter. "Lucy, you can start if you want to." Everyone looked over at Lucy who just kept on looking at the white tiles on the ground.

"El?" Lucy said.

"Yeah?" Eleven responded.

"What did the Demogorgon look like?" This wasn't the sort of question that Eleven had expected, but she readily answered anyway;

"It... had the basic shape of a person. But its arms were longer than normal... and it was really tall. It didn't have a face. Instead, its whole head opened up into a giant mouth." Lucy took a couple of deep breaths as if she was about to cry. "Is everything OK?" Eleven asked.

"I saw it last night." Everyone in the room except for Eleven and Carter gasped a little.

"Where?" Carter asked.

"In the woods. Not too far from my house."

"That's close to the lab." Dustin pointed out. "Do you think something happened when they kidnapped Will and El?"

"Could be..." Carter said, knowing that that wasn't it. "What time did you see it?" he asked Lucy. Lucy's face was turning red and her nose was starting to run. She was trying not to cry as she relived the trauma of the previous night.

"I don't know. About 10:30 I guess." Sarah put her arm on Lucy's shoulder to try to help her through. "I saw it eating a deer, then I fell over and it came after me. I was on the ground, it was inches away from my face and... I knew I was dead, or at least about to go to the Upside Down. But at the last minute, it went away."

"It just left you?" Lucas asked.

"Sort of... It was almost like... it wanted to attack me but there was a small part of it that stopped it. It looked almost like it was fighting with itself."

"What did it do after that?" asked Lucas.

"I don't know, I ran away." Lucy sniffled. "Can we talk about Carter's thing now?" She made it very clear that she didn't want to relive the events any more than she had to.

"Yes, of course." Carter said. He stood up, walked over to his desk, got a folder and returned to the table. "Brenner and her group left Boston two days ago and went to Colorado."

"That's where Ten is from." Eleven said. "I assume Nine is from there too. Did they go back to whatever National Laboratory is there?"

"No. We were expecting them to go to the Westcliffe National Laboratory, but they didn't. They went to a private research lab. It's owned by the company Morley Holdings Incorporated." Carter set the folder down on the table and everyone gathered around. "Some Coalition agents were there when they got there and took these photos. I just got them about five minutes before I had to start teaching, so I haven't looked through them yet." He opened the folder

to reveal the first picture. It was black and white, and a little grainy. The first picture just showed a car and a van. Carter flipped to the next one. It showed two people getting out of the car.

"I think that's Brenner." Eleven said, pointing to the woman on the left side of the car.

"Who's the other guy?" asked Mike.

"Don't know." Carter said. "Maybe if we could see his face." His voice trailed off as he flipped to the next picture. It was zoomed in on the van and the people getting out of it.

"They're Nine and Ten." Eleven said. She squinted and looked a little closer. "Is there someone else there?" Carter flipped to the next photo and they could clearly see a man in a lab coat getting out of the van behind Ten.

"Who's that guy?" asked Dustin. Carter looked in the back of the photo and found a little piece of paper.

"I didn't think to look for this earlier." he said. He started reading what it had to say. "Apparently some Coalition analysts identified that guy as Dr. Wallace Anderson. He's a researcher that works for Morley Holdings Incorporated." Carter read further down the list. "It doesn't say who that is." He said pointing at the person getting out of the car with Brenner. Carter flipped through the photos. Most of them were just different angles on the things that they had already seen and therefore nothing too special.

But about three pictures before the last one, something changed. The unknown man was suddenly looking at the camera and they could see his face. Everyone leaned in to see who it was. Sarah was the first one to lean out. Her eyes were wide and her mouth was hanging open.

"What's wrong, Sarah." Elizabeth asked.

"I don't believe it." Sarah said. "I actually don't believe that."

"What is it?" Carter asked. He too looked up from the picture.

"That's my dad." Sarah said. Eleven's eyes opened wide too.

"You're right." she said. "How is that possible?" She looked up at Carter. "I thought you killed him."

"I thought I did too." Carter said, unable to take his eyes off the figure in the photo that was certainly Robert Leasy.

---

There was a certain tension at the lunch table. Sarah refused to look at her food and Lucy only picked at her mashed potatoes. Amy was eating, but it seemed like there was something on her mind.

"Hey, Lucy..." Amy said out of the blue. Lucy slowly looked up.

"Yeah?" she asked.

"Sorry, but... There's one thing I still don't understand." Both Amy and Lucy seemed confused. "Why were you out in the woods at 10:30 last night?" Lucy looked back down and picked at her mashed potatoes some more.

"I went for a walk." she said quietly.

"At 10:30?" Amy asked. "Why?" There was another pause.

"It doesn't matter." Lucy eventually said.

"No. It does matter." Eleven said. Mike nodded in agreement next to her. "What's wrong?"

"My stepdad got a promotion and I have to move to San Francisco." Lucy didn't look up from her food, but she did start sniffing. Sarah stood up.

"It's OK." She walked over to Lucy and gave her a hug. "Everything is going to be OK."

---

Sarah was the first one back home after school ended. She was upset and confused after seeing her father's image in that photo that Carter showed them, but she tried not to think about it until they knew

more. She started making herself a snack in the kitchen when she heard the front door open.

"Tim!" she called. "Is that you?"

"Yeah." Tim called back from the foyer. Something didn't sound right in his voice so Sarah rushed over to see what was wrong.

"Is everything OK?" she asked.

"No." Tim said.

"Is something wrong? Are you feeling OK?"

"I'm OK. But there were some people being mean to my friends at school today." Tim walked into the kitchen, Sarah followed.

"That's not nice."

"No. But the worst part is that I know I could have done something about it but I'm not allowed to use my powers outside the house." Tim plopped himself down in one of the chairs and set his head down on the counter. Sarah thought carefully for a moment about what she was going to say. She determined that it wouldn't be a good idea to say it, but she did anyway.

"I probably shouldn't be telling you about this." Sarah started. "But did I ever tell you the story of when Troy tried to punch Mike after an assembly?"

"No." said Tim, not picking his head up from the granite.

"It was while Will was missing and none of us had any idea who El was. Troy was being an asshole about Will being gone and Mike got angry." Tim picked his head up off the counter and listened with interest. "Mike pushed him over, Troy got up and went to punch him before El stopped him in his tracks. She also made him pee his pants." Tim perked up a little bit and started laughing. Sarah went back to cooking. "Do what you will with that information, just don't do anything stupid."

"OK. I will." Tim said. He looked at what Sarah was making. "Are you making grilled cheese?" he asked.

"Yes. Would you like one?"

"Yes please."

---

"Will!" Eleven called as soon as she got home. "I'm home." She put her backpack and coat in her room then went over to Will's door to see how he was doing. She knocked lightly. There was no answer. "Will." she called again. "Are you OK?" There was still no answer. Eleven slowly pushed open the door. She was expecting to see a giant mess, but the room was pretty clean except for a few dresser drawers that were open. But there was no Will. Eleven looked around the house a little, then went back to Will's room where she noticed a folded piece of paper on his bed. She looked at a little closer and found that it said 'El' on it. She curiously picked it up, opened it, and started reading it;

Dear El,

It happened again. I turned into the monster again last night. It was hungry and I attacked another deer. While I was eating, Lucy showed up for some reason. I was able to stop for some reason, but the point is that I could have hurt her. Or, the monster could have hurt her. I don't think there's much of a difference anymore. I'm losing control of it and I've decided that I'm going to make sure that nobody gets hurt because of me so I've run away. Don't try to find me. Anyone that comes close to me is in danger.

-Will

---

Joyce came home at about 5:30 after a long day at work. She had had to deal with a couple of difficult customers and was really happy to just be home.

"I'm home." she called as soon as she opened the door. She happily took off her vest and walked back to Will's room. She was expecting to see her sick son, but instead she saw Eleven sitting on the bed. Her face was red from crying and she was clutching onto a piece of paper. "What's wrong?" Joyce asked. She rushed to the bed and sat down at Eleven's side.

"Call Carter." Eleven said between the tears.

"What? Why?" Eleven sniffled.

"Call Carter." she repeated.

---

It was only a couple of minutes before Carter pulled up in front of the Byers' house. Eleven gave him the letter from Will. He read it over a couple of times before looking up at Joyce and Eleven.

"We should probably sit down somewhere. This might take a while." Carter said. They sat down in the kitchen, then Eleven and Carter took some time to explain to Joyce what had been happening with Will over the past few months. Eleven was afraid that Joyce would get angry that they kept everything from her, but she just seemed interested in finding Will. "We will find him." Carter promised when he was done explaining. Eleven just thought about the part of Will's letter where he told them not to come looking for him, but she didn't say anything. "I'm going to call Chief Hopper as well as get some Coalition people on the case."

## 15. Chapter 15: The Traitor

Wallace and the scientists had been working uninterrupted for about a month. Using Dr. Brenner's work and One's knowledge of the Upside Down, they made progress in leaps and bounds. Wallace's behavior around One seemed to change after they had been working together for a while. He seemed to be less afraid of him and saw him more as a peer.

It had been hard to test Demogorgon killing methods without the Demogorgon, but they seemed to make do. They thought a lot about the monster's effect on electricity and how they could use that against it. After a while, the scientists had a weapon that they believed would work. It was a sort of sword, but with enough energy running through it that they were certain it could kill the Demogorgon. One examined it and tested it as extensively as he could, and he too gave it his seal of approval.

"Very good work, gentlemen." One said. He had gathered everyone in the main laboratory. The scientists were standing on one side of the room. One, Nine, Ten and Mallory were standing in a group about ten feet away from them. Ten smiled and started clapping. Once nobody else did, she slowed down and eventually stopped. "You really have done some great work here, I am very impressed." The scientists simply smiled and nodded humbly. "Wallace."

"Yes, sir?" Wallace asked. A month earlier, he would have been afraid, there was a hint of familiarity in his voice. It was as if he was addressing an old friend rather than his boss that could snap his neck with his mind.

"Come over here please." Wallace separated from the other scientists and walked over to the group of Legion members. He stopped in front of One, who put his hand on Wallace's shoulder. "You deserve all the recognition you are going to get from this and I would like to officially welcome you to The Legion." Wallace smiled. "As I promised, I not only won't kill you. But also, you get to join us on our mission and you will enjoy great power once we have accomplished our goals."



"Thank you, sir." He said. One took his hand off of Wallace's shoulder and indicated that Wallace should stand next to him.

"Excuse me, sir..." one of the other scientists spoke up. One looked over at them. The smile that was on his face when he had been talking to Wallace disappeared. "But... what about us." The other scientists nervously nodded along.

"You all have been very helpful." One said. A couple of the scientists tried to smile, but couldn't yet bring themselves to it. "But unfortunately, I need to take some measures to ensure that the work you did here remains a secret." The scientists looked nervously among themselves and at One. They had no idea what was going to happen to them. Nobody did. A couple of seconds later, a couple loud, sharp noises rang through the room and all four of the scientists collapsed. Dead. Wallace was surprised to find that he wasn't disturbed by this. The only person that even flinched was Mallory.

One turned around while wiping a drop of blood off of his nose. He looked over to see Ten smiling sadistically. She had been smiling throughout the meeting, but had only begun to smile maniacally when the scientists dropped dead. Ten took her eyes off the dead bodies for a moment to look up at One.

"Do we get to hear your plans today?" she asked. She had been asking every day and every day, One had told her that she just needed to be patient.

"Yes." One said. This came as a little bit of a surprise to everyone. "Some important work was completed today." One said while looking at Wallace. "Tonight we will celebrate over dinner and there I will tell you all of my plans."

---

After dinner, Mallory returned to her bedroom. It technically was a big office on one of the top floors of the lab, but the building wasn't exactly designed as a hotel. It had a comfortable bed and a number of creature comforts to make it feel like home. Not that she really ever had a home. Her entire childhood had been spent learning about The Legion from her parents... when her parents were home. Most of the time they just left her and her brother with the nanny while they

traveled the world in search of One. Then, her entire adulthood had been spent following her parents' and later her brother's footsteps.

She had had an idea of One's plans for some time now, but hearing them in their entirety was something different. They were a little different from what she had expected. Mallory didn't know what was happening to her. This was after all what she had been hoping for her entire life. She went over to a big armchair in the corner of the room to think. The chair had been in the office when she moved in. She moved most of the furniture out to open up the room, but she liked the chair. It was usually where she did some reading at night before she went to bed.

Mallory needed some time to think. She knew that nobody would disturb her for the rest of the night, so this was as good a time as any. She thought about One's plans and all the implications of them. She thought about what they meant for her, The Legion and everyone else. Then, Mallory made a decision. She decided to choose her own path for the first time in her life.

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Chief Hopper and a bunch of Coalition agents had been through the house that afternoon. Eleven wanted to help, but Carter insisted that she just stay put. At about 9:30, he said that she should "try to get some sleep, it's a school night after all". Eleven thought that this was an incredibly stupid idea. It wouldn't be too bad for her to get some sleep, but considering the mental state she was in at that moment, it would be ridiculous to try. Nonetheless, she reluctantly obliged and went to bed after both Carter and Joyce encouraged her to do so.

Eleven got changed into her pajamas, brushed her teeth, and said goodnight. She read a book in her room for a while to try to calm herself and take her mind off of things, but it didn't work. She couldn't really pay attention. She gave up on trying to read after a while and instead got under her blanket and closed her eyes. She didn't really want to go to sleep and thought it would be a futile effort. But as soon as her eyes shut, it felt like there was some force pulling her under. She was asleep in five minutes flat.

---

Eleven opened her eyes expecting to see her dark room. Instead, she

just saw darkness. She looked down and saw a faint reflection of herself in some water at her feet. She was in the void, the same place she went to when she was in the sensory deprivation chamber in the lab. But something wasn't right. It took a lot of effort for her to get into the void when she lived in the lab. The only other time she randomly got there while she was asleep was when Ten pulled her in to whisper things to her.

Eleven's heart started beating fast. She was there for a reason and she was scared for what it was. She looked left, then right, but only saw darkness. She started turning around, looking for something in the endless darkness. The cuffs of Eleven's pajamas were getting wet from the water that was splashing around, but Eleven didn't notice. She had turned around a couple of times and was about to give up when she turned around again and saw a tall man standing only about two feet from her.

"Hello, Eleven." Bob Leasy said. Eleven stumbled back and almost fell over as soon as she saw him. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you." Eleven took a couple of deep breaths before she was able to talk again.

"It's pretty normal for someone to get startled when a dead guy randomly shows up behind them." Eleven was still breathing hard. "How did you come back to life."

"Robert Leasy died and is still gone. I never died however." the man said.

"You're not Mr. Leasy?" Eleven asked. "But you have his body."

"His fresh corpse made a good vessel for me to take over when I re-entered this world." Eleven thought for a moment.

"One?" she asked. One nodded. "You made it back." One nodded one more time. Eleven looked around, trying to think of something to say. "What are you doing here? Why are you talking to me?"

"You were created in the pursuit of me." he explained. "I think it's only fair that I offer you a chance to help our organization with our ultimate mission."

"Why would I do that?" Eleven asked. The surprise she had felt was being replaced with anger. One remained as calm as ever.

"Because you belong with us. You deserve your place in our world." Eleven didn't say anything so One continued. "You would have a lot of power. True power. What about your friend Mike Wheeler? He could join you." Hearing Mike's name struck a chord in Eleven.

"Is Mike in danger?"

"Everyone is in danger. I want to change that. Have you actually taken a look at the world around you? Things weren't exactly perfect when I first got stuck in the Upside Down, but things are much worse now. The problem is that there are just too many people here that all hate each other. I want to change that." Eleven paused for a moment. She let all the fear and anger leave her so she could just think clearly. She tried to go through what One had just said in her head to figure out what he meant.

"You're going to kill a lot of people." she said.

"Yes I am. But the ones that survive will finally find peace under my rule."

"But... that's just wrong."

"Don't act so innocent. You have blood on your hands too. Not that you would actually want to admit that to Mike." One's mention of Mike set off a spark inside Eleven. She thought about her life since she had escaped the lab. She thought about everything she had changed about herself and the person she was trying to be. The person that Mike could be proud of.

"I'm a different person than I was. I know you're on the wrong side." One remained silent. "I will never join you."

"I hope you realize the mistake you're making."

"Go away!" Eleven yelled. All the anger she had earlier returned, stronger than before. "Go away!" she repeated. Eleven closed her eyes and started screaming, trying to wake up.

Eleven felt a hand on her shoulder. She opened her eyes to see that she was still in the void and then she spun around towards the body that the hand belonged to. She was looking directly at Mike.

"El! Is everything OK?" Mike asked. Eleven looked around to see if One was still there, but he was nowhere to be seen.

"How are you here?" she asked.

"I don't know." Mike said. "I was asleep. I heard you screaming and I came running. Is everything OK?"

"No."

"I'm here for you. What's wrong." Mike looked around for a place to sit, but he could just see darkness and water. He took both of Eleven's hands in his and looked into her eyes. The fear that Eleven had just a moment previously melted away and she felt secure with Mike.

She told him what had just happened with One, and everything that had been happening with Will over the past couple of months.

"I guess the best thing to do would be to tell Carter what happened." Mike said.

"Yeah. Thanks for being here."

"No problem." Mike and Eleven pulled each other into a hug. They stayed there for some time. Even though they were asleep in different rooms in different houses, they felt closer than ever.

The next time Eleven opened her eyes, she saw the ceiling of her room. She took a moment to collect her thoughts before rolling over and looking at her clock. 2:03 AM. Eleven reached over to the bedside table, past the clock and grabbed her Super-Comm.

"Mike, are you there? Over." she called. There was nothing for a moment.

"Yeah, I'm here. Over." Mike's voice said.

"Just checking... did you meet me in a dream? Over." Eleven asked.

She didn't know what answer she wanted. If he said yes, that meant that they got to spend some nice time together, but it also meant that she actually met One.

"Yes. To be honest, I didn't know if that was real either... So... all that stuff with Will is actually happening? Over."

"Yeah. It is." Eleven thought for a moment. "There's some stuff I have to do right now. Talk to you tomorrow. Over."

"OK. Over." Eleven put away the radio, pushed the blanket off of her, and stood up. It was completely dark outside, but there was some artificial yellow light streaming in through the crack under the door. When Eleven walked out, she saw Joyce and Carter still sitting at the kitchen table.

"Is something wrong?" Joyce asked upon seeing Eleven. "Could you not sleep?"

"I was able to, but we might have some bigger problems."

"What exactly?" asked Carter.

---

The meeting after chemistry class the next day wasn't all that cheery. Eleven told the group about her meeting with One and of his plans, then Carter told them about what happened with Will.

"Why didn't he tell us sooner?" asked Lucas.

"He was scared about what you would think." Eleven said, trying to defend her brother.

"But he put us in danger by not telling us. You too."

"Please!" called Carter. "Now is really not the time to be fighting."

There was a knock at the door. Everyone looked over at the door, then back to the group that was there. Carter started counting to see if anyone was absent. Will obviously wasn't there. But other than him, everybody else was. Even Elizabeth was there. He walked over to the door, then unlocked and opened it. He was pretty shocked to

be looking at none other than Mallory Brenner. Carter was pushed out of the way a little and Mallory came flying into the room and landed at Eleven's feet.

"Lock the door." Eleven said to Carter, anger brewing in her voice as she wiped her nose. Carter did as he was told.

"Please..." Mallory started to say before she slid back and was slammed into the wall behind her.

"Why?" Eleven asked. "Why should I show you any mercy?" There was a bloody drip coming from her nose that flowed down her face until it met her lip. She didn't make any attempt to wipe it off because she knew that it would just start back up again soon. Mallory threw her hands in front of her. It looked like she was trying to protect herself even though both she and Eleven knew it wouldn't do anything. Eleven walked slowly towards her, preparing her powers for another blow.

"I want to help you!" screamed Mallory. Eleven stopped in her tracks. She wasn't expecting that.

"Why should I believe you?" Eleven asked. "How do we know that One didn't send you?"

"I left in the middle of the night yesterday and got to Hawkins as fast as I could. He is probably only realizing now that I left."

"But why? Why did you leave?" Eleven was yelling at this point.

"One told us his plans and... I knew I had to do something." Carter came up behind Eleven and put his hand on her shoulder.

"El. I think she's telling the truth." he said.

A couple minutes later, Mallory was off the floor and sitting at one of the student desks. The desks and chairs were attached together, so it was hard for the middle school students to get out when the bell rang. The group imagined this would make it pretty hard for Mallory to try to run away, but they weren't too afraid of that happening.

"One is planning something huge. He says that the world is

overpopulated and that to gain peace, he's going to kill a lot of people."

"El already told us that." Mike said. Mallory looked up at Eleven in surprise.

"How do you know that?" she asked.

"One contacted me in my dreams last night. He said that I belong with him and told me a little bit about what he's planning, but we still don't know how he's going to do it. If he even can."

"I don't really believe that he's able to do anything serious. Not yet anyway." Carter said.

"One has the drive and the means to put his plans into motion immediately." Mallory said. "The Legion has members in most major companies and high up in almost every government in the world. They have access to all kinds of weapons not to mention the damage that One and the twins could do alone." Carter took a moment to get through his head what Mallory had just said.

"You're saying that he can kill thousands of people whenever he wants?" Carter asked.

"No. He could kill millions." Mallory responded.

Everyone looked up to Carter. He was always the man with the plan. But for once, he had no plan. Carter had no idea what to do.

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Both of Amy's parents worked, so she was alone at home with her sister. Her sister, Jenny, was in the sixth grade, having just started middle school in August. They weren't exactly friends, but they didn't hate each other either. For the most part, they just kept to themselves.

It was early April and Amy was supposed to be doing homework, but she couldn't concentrate. Her mind was preoccupied with thoughts from the day's meeting with Carter. Mainly the fact that Mallory Brenner had randomly showed up. Carter had some Coalition agents come and take her to the base in Indianapolis, but they didn't



officially arrest her.

Her window was open. Amy usually liked to have her window open when she did homework and this was the first day of the year that it was warm enough to. She stared blankly outside at some birds in the tree, but she was really only half paying attention to them. Amy was so lost in her thoughts that she was startled when she heard her door open. She jumped a little bit and turned around to see Jenny standing in the now open door.

"Did I seriously scare you?" Jenny asked while laughing a little bit.

"No." Amy insisted. "I just didn't hear you. Knock next time."

"Did you seriously not hear me calling from downstairs? I was yelling pretty loud."

"What do you want, Jenny?" Jenny sighed.

"There's a guy at the door for you." Jenny left the door open as she walked away. Amy stood up and started walking downstairs to see who was at the door. She didn't have any idea who it could be. Her mind turned to the worst. She thought about the possibility that it could be a Legion member. Once she was downstairs, Amy edged slowly towards the door and just opened it a tiny bit to see who was on the other side. It was Dustin.

"Dustin! Hi! I wasn't expecting you." Amy said, opening the door the rest of the way.

"Really? We made these plans a week ago." Amy searched her mind to try to remember what plans she had made with Dustin. Suddenly, the memory hit her like a stack of bricks.

"We were going to go to the movies!" Amy said, slapping herself in the face after she said it.

"Yeah. We're going to miss the movie if we don't get over there soon." Dustin said, showing Amy his watch.

"To be honest, considering everything that's happened today, I don't really feel up to going to the movies." Dustin seemed a little

disappointed, but he understood.

"Yeah, I get it. Some other time then?"

"Yeah. Defiantly. Sorry."

"It's OK. I guess I'll head home then." Dustin turned around and started walking to his bike.

"Wait!" Amy called. Dustin stopped and turned around. "Do you want to stay and do something with me?"

"Sure." Dustin said.

Dustin hadn't been in a girl's room before he had started dating Amy. He had been in Nancy's room when they were little and Nancy would play with them, but they were so young that he didn't really think that counted. Dustin was amazed at how clean her room always seemed to be. There were certainly things out of place and strewn around the room. But compared to his room and those of a lot of his friends, it was pretty clean. There were pictures all over the walls. They were mostly polaroids of Amy, Lucy, and Sarah, but there were some school art projects and drawings up there as well. The bedspread had a nice flowery pattern to it.

Dustin sat down on the bed and Amy sat next to them. They just sat in an awkward silence for a little while.

"Is there something specific you want to talk about?" Dustin asked.

"No, not really. I just want you to be here." Dustin looked over to Amy and smiled.

"I'll always be here for you."

---

The first couple of times Elizabeth came over for dinner, Carter had made a big deal of setting up the dining room with a nice table cloth and candles. That became time consuming after a while and Elizabeth stopped seeming like a special guest and more as just as a member of the family, so they all just ate at the kitchen table.

One thing that Elizabeth and Carter really liked doing together was cooking. To each of them, it was a chore alone. But it was enjoyable when they did it together. That night, they had made a big casserole with peas, and mac and cheese on the side. Once everything was ready, Carter called for Tim and Sarah to come down. Tim was the first one to come, running excitedly down the stairs. Sarah followed soon after. She chose not to run, but she was excited nonetheless.

They all sat down to eat and dug in. A conversation about everybody's days got underway, but was interrupted after a couple of minutes by the ringing of the phone.

"I'll get that." Carter said while getting up. Carter always insisted on getting the phone just in case someone from The Coalition called. The phone was around the corner from the table, so Tim, Sarah and Elizabeth couldn't see Carter, but they could hear him loud and clear. "Carter." he said to introduce himself. There was silence for a little bit while he listened. "Please slow down for a moment, Ms. DeCanner." Tim sat up a little bit and got a little scared. Sarah knew that DeCanner was the last name of one of the bullies that had been messing with Tim's friends. "What did Tim do?" Carter asked from down the hall. He sounded as calm as ever. "But how could Tim have pushed your son into that mud when he was apparently on the other side of the field?" Elizabeth suddenly laughed and some peas flew out of her mouth. She covered her mouth after a moment and looked over to Tim. She looked a little embarrassed for spitting peas at him, and a little proud of him. Carter continued talking from down the hall; "I'll ask him if he did anything, but I can assure you that your son just tripped. Have a good night."

There was a small click as Carter hung up the phone. He slowly came back into the kitchen and took his place at the table. Tim was scared for what he was going to say. He tried to read his dad's face, but couldn't figure anything out.

"Tim." Carter said, still expressionless.

"Yes, dad." Tim said, the little bit of fear apparent in his voice.

"Did you push Brett DeCanner into some mud with your powers?"

"Yes." Tim hung his head, ashamed. Carter laughed a little bit. Tim looked back up to see a smile creeping across Carter's face.

"I probably should be at least a little bit mad, but I'm honestly kind of impressed."

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A/N: Thanks for keeping on reading. I really appreciate it. Please send in a review to let me know what you think.

## 16. Chapter 16: The Plans

A/N: This was originally one very long chapter, but I split it up into two parts and am posting them separately. The second part is coming on Friday.

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The top three floors of the MHI lab were all offices. Since One had fired everybody, they had been turned into something of a hotel. The now dead scientists and Wallace had the first floor, Nine, Ten and Mallory had the second, and One had the top floor all to himself. He left the director's office as an office and spent most of his days there, working on planning for what they were going to do next. Despite the fact that he had done a lot of work, the desk was clean and orderly. There was not a single thing out of place. The walls were for the most part empty, but there were a couple of certificates and pictures from the person that had worked there before One. The wall opposite the door was completely covered in floor to ceiling windows.

One stood looking out the window. The whole sky was gray, filled with clouds. There was a storm brewing above the mountains. The light gray clouds slowly got darker and darker until the sun was almost completely blocked out. Some people would be annoyed about all the rain that was going to come. Some would be scared about the booming thunder that would come. One wasn't of either of these opinions. He only saw beauty in the swirling masses in the sky. There were no clouds in the Upside Down. There was no sky as far as anybody could tell. Only darkness. One liked seeing something new for a change.

The big mahogany door behind One creaked open and Ten stuck her head through.

"Did you find her?" One asked without looking away from the windows. There was a hint of deep anger in his voice that Ten had never heard before. Ten walked into the room and nervously closed the door behind her.

"We looked through the entire facility. As far as I can tell, she's not here and one of the cars is gone." Ten said. The normal hint of a

psychopathic laugh in her voice wasn't there. One sighed. The first clap of thunder rang through the valley outside. "Nine is reviewing the security tapes from last night to make sure." One continued to look outside. He focused on the trees on the side of the mountains. They were all swaying in the force of the wind. He thought it was amazing that an invisible force could affect so many huge trees.

"Does Wallace know anything?" One asked.

"I asked him. He said he doesn't know anything." Ten said. She paused for a long moment, trying to decide if she should keep talking. "What are we going to do now? She knows our plans." One turned around and walked over to the desk. He opened a door under it to reveal a safe which he opened. Ten was expecting to see some strange artifacts and dangerous technology in the safe, but all that was inside it was a big tan file. One set the file down on the desk and began examining its contents.

"Get your brother and Wallace. We need to accelerate our plans."

---

Amy and Dustin had just sat together on Amy's bed for a while. They were quiet, but it didn't seem awkward to them, just nice. As time went on, they sat back on the pillows at the head of the bed. Then, neither of them had noticed that they had fallen asleep until there was a knock at the door. Both Amy and Dustin were startled awake.

"Amy? Are you OK in there?" a woman's voice came through the door.

"Yeah, mom! Just give me a second." Amy called. She turned to Dustin then started whispering. "My parents don't know you're here. They're going to freak if they see you here."

"What should I do?" Dustin whispered back. Amy quickly looked around her room.

"The closet!" Amy quietly exclaimed. She and Dustin rushed over to the closet in the wall. Dustin got in and squeezed himself into the corner. "I'll get you out as soon as I can." Amy closed the closet door and went over to unlock the other door for her mother.

"Why was your door locked?" asked Amy's mom. She didn't sound angry about it, just curious.

"Don't know. Must have bumped into the thing when I closed it last." Amy lied.

"OK." said her mom. It was pretty obvious that she didn't fully believe Amy. "How was your day?" Amy thought back through her day to try and answer that question. Over the course of the past twenty four hours, she had learned that one of her friends had just run away because he was turning into a dangerous monster and didn't want to eat any of his friends. Also, that there was a two thousand year old telekinetic psychopath, piloting one of her best friend's father's corpse, who was planning on murdering a good percentage of the world's population. Then, the woman that kidnapped two of her closest friends and used them to bring back said telepathic psychopath came and asked to join their team.

"Good." Amy ended up saying. She decided an uninspired monosyllabic answer would be better than explaining the whole situation to her mother.

"Glad to hear it." her mom said with a smile. They sat down on the bed and dove into a pretty routine conversation. Amy tried her hardest not to pay attention to the closet. But she couldn't help stealing a few glances over towards the white slatted door every once in a while.

Dustin was somehow very scared and very bored at the same time. He could see a little through the slats in the closet door, but very little. He noticed a couple of times when Amy glanced over at him. His heart rate went up each time she did. Partly because he liked seeing her fave, but mostly because he was afraid that she would draw her mother's attention to the closet.

There wasn't really anything in the corner of the closet for Dustin to rest on, so he just kind of sat down on the floor. This wasn't so smart and after a couple of minutes, he decided it would have been better if he had stayed standing. His back started to hurt but he didn't dare stand up for fear of making a lot of noise. He tried not to focus too much on the conversation happening outside. Even though Amy

knew that he was there, he still didn't think he should be eavesdropping. He concentrated so little that he didn't even notice that the conversation had ended until Amy opened the door for him.

"Hey, you OK?" Amy asked when she saw Dustin curled up awkwardly in the corner.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Could you help me out?" Dustin didn't have anything to grab onto to help him stand up, so he stuck out his arms. Amy grabbed him and pulled him up.

"Sorry about that. I didn't hear her get home."

"Me neither. I think I fell asleep."

"Me too." Dustin glanced at his watch. 7:42.

"Oh!" he exclaimed while keeping his voice to a whisper. "I have to get home. How should I get out of here?"

"I'm sorry to do this to you, but could you take the window? You can climb down the tree pretty easily and your bike should be right there."

"No problem." Dustin walked over and started opening the window. He was about to climb out when he turned around to look at Amy again. "You know... the ending was a bit stressful, but I had a nice time." Amy smiled.

"Me too." Dustin leaned in and the two shared a short kiss. Dustin broke the kiss after a moment but didn't stop smiling.

"See you tomorrow." he said.

"See you tomorrow." Amy said back as Dustin climbed out the window.

---

Carter's chemistry lesson that day didn't go as smoothly as they usually do. He made a couple of mistakes on the chalkboard that some students called him out on and really just seemed out of it. Everybody noticed that he had dark bags under his eyes, but not



many people knew why. The lesson finally ended after what seemed like an especially long time. Carter didn't give any homework, probably because he had forgotten to plan anything.

Elizabeth showed up pretty quickly and the meeting got started.

"I spent the entire night at the Coalition base in Indianapolis talking to Brenner." Carter said while yawning.

"What did she say?" asked Mike.

"She told us everything she knows about One and The Legion. Now we know what companies they control, what governments they have influence in, and exactly what resources they have."

"That's good, but how soon is One going to start?" Lucas asked.

"I have to imagine that it won't be for a while. After losing Brenner, he lost his connection to the main body of The Legion. It will take him a while to regroup so it will probably be a while before he does anything." Carter said. He was making some assumptions, but was pretty confident nonetheless.

Eleven had been listening, but hadn't really been active in the conversation. She was sitting on one of the desks just looking down at the floor while she thought about everything that was happening. Brenner showing up the previous day was certainly a shock. Eleven really hated the idea of working with anyone related to the man who ruined the first decade of her life, but somewhere deep down she was willing to give Mallory a chance. But beyond everything that was happening with The Legion, there was something that kept on eating away at Eleven. Something that nobody seemed to want to talk about.

"What about Will?" she asked without looking up at Carter. Everyone else in the room looked up at her, but Eleven kept staring at the floor. When Carter didn't say anything for a while, Eleven looked up and asked again. "What about him?" her voice was more forceful this time. "He's missing, we know that something terrible is happening to him and nobody seems to care."

"That's not true." Carter insisted. "We have some people looking for him, but we've had to redirect resources towards One. I think that the possible deaths of millions is more important than Will right now."

"More important?" Eleven was getting angry.

"Do you know how many people could die if One succeeds?" Carter was staying calm better than Eleven, but he was still losing hold a little bit. Eleven stood up and started to walk to the back of the room. She knew that Carter was right, but she didn't want to think about it.

"None of them are Will." she said, beginning to pace around the behind the desks. The rest of the kids had remained really quiet.

---

Carter was back in Indianapolis that night and Tim was at one of his friends' houses. Elizabeth spent the night at Carter's house so Sarah wouldn't be alone. The two of them had somewhat of a strange relationship at first when Sarah moved in with Carter, with Elizabeth being Sarah's English teacher and all. But they became good friends pretty quickly.

Elizabeth hadn't assigned English homework that night specifically because she didn't want to stress out anyone in their little group. The free time was nice, but Sarah really didn't know what to do with it. She and Elizabeth just decided to sit down and watch TV after they couldn't think of anything else to do. There were some Get Smart reruns on that they had found while flipping through channels. Sarah stopped when she saw the show, asked Elizabeth if it was OK, and they learned that they were both fans. The show was pretty funny, but both Sarah and Elizabeth were too stressed out to laugh.

"What do you want for dinner?" asked Elizabeth. The sun was starting to set, indicating it was time to start thinking about that.

"I don't know. I'm kind of bored with the normal things we make." Elizabeth thought for a moment, then perked up.

"I know!" she said excitedly. "I have a great cookbook back at my house that I got from my mom about a month ago. I'll go get it." Elizabeth's good mood was rubbing off on Sarah a little bit as she

cracked a smile.

"OK, do you want to go get it?"

"Yeah. I won't be long." Elizabeth grabbed her car keys off the counter and went outside to drive home and get the cookbook.

Sarah was suddenly home alone, but in a pretty good mood. She walked around the kitchen a little and noticed a key on the counter. She went to examine it and laughed a little bit when she figured out what it was. Elizabeth had taken her car keys, but left her house key. It wouldn't take her too long to notice her error.

Just as Sarah expected, the doorbell rang about a minute later. She picked the key up and walked quickly to the door.

"I knew you would be back soon." Sarah said while unlocking the door. She expected Elizabeth to be standing on the other side when she opened it, but it wasn't Elizabeth.

---

Mike and Eleven didn't get too much time alone, so after school it was refreshing to just spend the entire evening together in Mike's basement. They started out doing homework, but they didn't have any chemistry or English, so that didn't take too long. After about an hour, they ended up just lying down on the couch, just enjoying being together. Mike was behind Eleven and could only see the back of her head, so he was surprised when he heard a distinct kind of snuffle. The kind you only hear when someone is crying.

"El... are you OK?" Mike asked.

"No." Eleven said honestly. The two sat up so they could see each other better.

"What's wrong?" Mike asked, taking Eleven's hands into his own.

"Will. Nobody seems to care that he's gone."

"That's just not true. We do care, we're just... afraid."

"What about last time he was lost. Weren't you afraid then?" Mike

thought for a moment.

"Of course we were, but we didn't really know what was out there. This time... it all seems too real. They already kidnapped you and Will once, we know some of the people that have died and being able to put a face to the danger just makes it worse. Plus, we know that The Coalition is doing something about all of it." Eleven's crying slowed. Mike was able to get through to her a lot better than Carter was.

"I guess I understand." Eleven said even though she still didn't really want to.

"Look." Mike said, taking his girlfriend's hands in his. "We will find Will. I'm sure that he's OK, he's just as scared as we are." Eleven knew that Mike wasn't at all sure about what he was saying, but it made her feel better nonetheless. She lied back down on the couch, Mike followed suit. She still wasn't really happy, but she also didn't want to talk about it much more.

---

Amy and Dustin thought that the best thing to do would be to pretend like nothing had happened and that life was going on as normal. After school that day, they went to the movie theater to make up for the day before when Amy had forgotten. They saw 'Pretty in Pink'. It was a movie that Dustin didn't really care to see, but Amy wanted to and Dustin was OK with seeing it if it was with her.

"What did you think?" Dustin asked after they got out of the theater.

"I thought it was pretty good. Do you want to see it again?" Amy asked as a joke.

"I think I need a break right now, but maybe some time later." They started on the way back to Amy's house. The walk was pretty quiet, but pleasant nonetheless. The sky was dark gray when they left and it was pretty quickly turning black. Amy's house was pretty far away from the town square and it would take a little while to get there.

"Look!" Amy exclaimed about halfway through the walk, pointing up

at the sky. "The first star! Make a wish." Both she and Dustin closed their eyes and silently made a wish. Dustin thought it was a little silly, but he did it anyway.

"What did you wish for?" he asked when they were done.

"I can't tell you, or else it won't come true." They set off again so they wouldn't get home too late. The wind rustled through the leaves and Dustin could hear some footsteps behind them, but otherwise the night was silent. Dustin didn't think too much of the footsteps at the time. But looking back on it, he always wished that he had turned around a couple of seconds earlier.

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A/N: Once again, the next chapter is coming on Friday. Please write a review in the meantime. Even if it is just a short comment, I really like to hear from you. Thanks for reading.

## 17. Chapter 17: The Beginning of the End

"How are they treating you here, Mallory?" Carter asked as he sat down across the table from Mallory in the Coalition interrogation room. The woman was wearing an unflattering orange jumpsuit.

"Honestly, pretty good. Everyone here has been pretty polite, they gave me something to read so I wasn't too bored. One guard even played a game of chess with me this morning."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"I'm glad to have it. I'm glad that I finally made a good decision in my life."

"I hope you know that you won't be getting out of this without some charges against you. They certainly will be reduced considering your recent actions, but there still are some things you will need to answer for." Mallory nodded.

"I understand. I've always know that there would be consequences for what I've done. I'm just glad that so many people won't get hurt because of me." Silence hung in the air for a moment until Carter changed the subject.

"Let's begin. What was One doing in that lab for the past month?" Mallory sighed.

"I can't say exactly. One is very careful about who has what information, so I only saw little snippets of what they were working on. He did say something about..." Mallory was cut off by a loud buzzing that came from the door being opened. An agent poked her head through the door.

"Agent Carter, there's a call for you from someone named Chief Hopper. He said it was urgent." the agent said.

"Thank you." Carter turned back to Mallory while getting up out of his chair. "I'm sorry, but I have to go get this. We will continue as soon as we can."

There was an empty desk in the main office of the base that was reserved for Agent Carter when he was working there. There was a small red light blinking on the phone to indicate that there was a call waiting. Carter picked up the phone.

"Carter." he said to introduce himself.

"It's Hopper. I just got a call from Mrs. Henderson saying that Dustin went out for a movie with Amy and didn't come home. Amy's parents also called and said that she didn't come home either."

"That doesn't sound good. Let me know if you find anything."

"Sure thing." Carter hung up the phone and it immediately started ringing again.

"That was fast." Carter remarked to himself." He picked up the phone.  
"Carter."

"It's Elizabeth." Elizabeth's voice sounded stressed and distraught.

"Is something wrong?" Carter asked.

"I went to get a cookbook from my house but forgot my key. When I got back to your house, Sarah was gone." Carter knew that this couldn't be a coincidence.

"Dustin and Amy are missing too. I'm on my way. I'll be back in Hawkins as soon as I can." Carter hung up the phone and started running towards the elevator to get to his car.

---

Sarah woke up with a headache. All the light around her didn't help. Her vision was blurry at first, but after a while, she was able to recognize the room that she was in. She was surprised that it was the Hawkins Middle School gym. Sarah closed her eyes and shook her head. She tried to rub her eyes, but found that her hands were tied to the chair she was sitting in. Over to her side, she noticed two other chairs. It took another moment for her eyes to focus enough to realize that the people in the other two chairs were Amy and Dustin.

"Amy!" she called, but there was no response. "Dustin!" Still no

response. "Are you guys OK?"

"Don't worry about them." came a booming, familiar voice. "They'll wake up soon enough." Sarah turned to look at the voice and was terrified to see her father's corpse walking towards her wearing a big wool coat. She tried to look away but wasn't quite able to.

"What do you want with us?" Sarah demanded.

"I'd rather wait so I can tell all of you at once. We can talk in the meantime." Sarah knew that the man standing before her was not her father.

"Why are you acting like you know me?" Sarah asked angrily.

"Because all your father's memories are still up here." One tapped his head. "Is there something you want to know about him? Something he would never tell you? I can tell you all of it."

"I don't want to talk to you." Sarah looked away.

"Why not? Your father has some fun little secrets in here. Would you like to hear about how he killed your mother?" Sarah's head snapped back up, making eye contact with One.

"That's a lie! My mother died in a car crash! I saw the wreckage!" Sarah's voice got much louder, her face turned red and tears started falling from her eyes.

"I'm assuming you didn't see the sabotage thought. Your father was pretty smart about that. He let her get out onto the highway before the brakes cut out."

"He wouldn't do that. He loved her." The tears were making it hard for Sarah to talk.

"He would do that if she had found out what he did for The Legion. She said that she was going to report him, so he had no choice but to kill her. Your mother's death was an unnecessary tragedy in the pursuit of a better world."

"Better world? That's what you call it?"



"Have you seen your world today? Humanity: 1986. Half the world is pointing apocalyptic weapons at the other half who is in turn pointing similar weapons back at them and yet you claim that you are at peace. Your father worked hard to help me and ended up giving up his life to bring me back. In thanks for his sacrifice, you will get the place he always wanted for you once we have achieved our goal." Sarah tried to think of something to say, but she couldn't. Dustin started to stir off to her side.

"Ah, Mr. Henderson. I'm glad you could make it." One said. Amy also started to wake up.

"Where are we?" Dustin asked once he was awake enough to speak.

"You are in the Hawkins Middle School gymnasium." One said. Dustin became more coherent and began to look around. The first thing that Dustin saw was Amy sitting next to him, tied to a chair.

"Amy!" Dustin called. The big door opened up and two more people came into the room. Nine and Ten.

"Don't worry." One said. "She's fine. For now. As long as you do what I say."

"What?" asked Dustin.

"I'm going to let you go." One waved his hand over to Nine who started untying Dustin. "You're going to find Agent Carter and tell him where we are. Tell him to bring everything he has. If you don't, we will kill your friends. Starting with your girlfriend." Amy hadn't said anything, but the fear in her eyes was apparent. "Go." Demanded One.

---

Eleven was still over at Mike's house when dinner started, so she was invited to stay. It wasn't all that uncommon for her to eat with the family. Sometimes she really felt like a family member herself. Mike's parents were very warm and welcoming towards her (his dad a little less so, but that just seemed like his personality) and Holly felt like her own little sister.

Dinner that night was spaghetti with tomato sauce. It was pretty common to the Wheeler family, but Eleven still thought it was pretty great. The table was really quiet so Karen tried to start some conversation.

"How is school going for you, Elle?" she asked. Karen still didn't know her son's girlfriend as 'Eleven', so she called her 'Elle' like everyone else that didn't know.

"It's going pretty good. I'm on track to get straight A's this semester." Despite everything, Eleven was still able to focus on school and get some pretty amazing grades.

"That's great." Karen said. "I always hoped you would be a good influence on Mike." Eleven wanted to say something about Mike being a good influence on her. After all, it was him that taught her all about how school and simply a normal life worked. But she didn't have time to say this. Instead, the doorbell rang. Ted was confused.

"Is anyone expecting someone?" he asked. Nobody answered. The doorbell rang again, then again, then just kept ringing until Mike got up and opened the door. On the other side was a very out of breath Dustin.

"Have you been running?" Mike asked with a little bit of a smile, knowing how out of character of Dustin it was to run long distances. But Dustin didn't smile.

"I need to use your phone." he said. The smile left Mike's face.

"Why? Has something happened?" Dustin took another couple of breaths before he spoke again.

"I need to call Carter."

---

The phone rang for longer than it normally did when they called Carter. Usually, he picked up after the first couple rings, but not this time. Eventually, someone did pick up.

"Hello." came Elizabeth's stressed and somewhat scared voice.

"It's Mike. Is Carter there?" asked Mike.

"Carter?" asked Karen who was standing right behind Mike, Eleven and Dustin while they used the phone. "Who's that?"

"Doesn't matter." Mike said very quickly.

"He's on his way back from Indianapolis right now." Elizabeth said. It was only then that Mike, Dustin and Eleven remembered that Carter was spending the night at the Coalition base with Mallory.

"Why is he coming back so early?" Eleven asked.

"El, is that you?" Elizabeth asked, she obviously couldn't see what they were doing over the phone, so she was a little surprised that there was more than one person on the other end.

"Here's Dustin. I'm here too."

"Dustin! You're OK! Carter got a call from Cheif Hopper saying that you didn't make it home after going out with Amy. Is she there too?"

"No. That's what we're calling about. We need to talk to Carter." Dustin said.

"He should be back here soon. Sarah is also missing so he said he would come here." Elizabeth said.

"We're on our way over." Mike said.

"OK. Dustin, I'm going to call your mom while I wait to let her know that you're OK." Elizabeth said.

"Thanks." Dustin said. "See you soon." He hung up the phone. Dustin, Mike and Eleven started running towards the front door.

"Where are you three going?" asked Karen.

"I'm sorry, but I can't tell you right now." Mike said while getting on his shoes.

"Yes you can and you will." Karen insisted.

"No. Seriously, this is an emergency."

"That's all the more reason to tell me about it." Mike had just finished tying his shoes.

"I'm sorry, but you wouldn't understand." Karen started saying more, but Mike didn't listen. He, Eleven and Dustin were already out the door.

---

Dustin, Mike and Eleven showed up at Carter's house at just about the same time that Carter's blue BMW quickly pulled into the driveway. He got out and looked at the group of kids on bikes.

"Dustin!" he exclaimed. "You're OK. Where's Amy."

"She and Sarah are in the school gym being held by One, Nine and Ten." Carter's eyes went wide. His worst fears had been confirmed. As Carter walked up to the front door, he thought through what he should do. He took out his house key, but Elizabeth opened the door before he got there. The kids followed him inside.

They didn't stay inside for long. Only long enough for Carter to make some phone calls. First, he called The Coalition to tell them to send a SWAT team. Then, Chief Hopper to tell him to close off access to the school and make sure that everybody else was out of there.

"OK. Two SWAT teams are on the way. The first one will be here in just a couple minutes, the other is held up in traffic out of Indianapolis." Carter said, hanging up the phone. He started walking towards the door.

"What should we do?" Eleven asked, going after him.

"Nothing. You should stay here where you're safe." Carter insisted.

"What? We're a part of this too. We have a place in this." Eleven said.

"Yes. Your place is here. I won't risk your safety. Elizabeth, keep an eye on them while I'm gone. I'll call when I can." Carter rushed out the door and to the car.

There was a strange and uncomfortable silence in the room after Carter left. Mike and Dustin sat down on the couch while Eleven paced around the living room, frustrated. Elizabeth stood in the corner.

"We can't just stay here." Eleven said.

"Sure we can." Dustin said. "One is a pretty dangerous guy and I'd prefer never to meet him again."

"But... One and the twins have powers. The SWAT team can't do anything but I might be able to."

"You're just fourteen, he's two thousand. No offense, but I think that One is more powerful than you." Mike said. He knew that Eleven was right, but he couldn't stand the thought of her possibly getting hurt.

"It would be better than hiding here." Eleven grumbled. The silence returned. Eleven kept on pacing. Elizabeth thought she should say something, but couldn't figure out exactly what to say. "No." Eleven suddenly said.

"No what?" asked Elizabeth.

"I can't stay here. I'm going to the school." Eleven started walking towards the door, but Elizabeth rushed and got there before her to block her path.

"We are going to listen to Peter. We are staying here." Elizabeth said. Mike and Dustin stood up so they could see what was happening in the foyer.

"Elizabeth. Let me through." Eleven demanded. "I've made up my mind and you know that there's no way you can stop me."

"I can try. Please just listen to me."

"No. There isn't enough time. Get out of the way."

"I won't let you."

"Don't make me do this."

"Just go back and we can discuss this." Elizabeth suddenly flew off to the side and hit the wall. She didn't hit it too hard, but there was a good *thud* that came with it. Eleven quickly opened the door and ran out to her bike.

"El!" Mike called as Dustin and him ran out to follow Eleven. Eleven got on her bike and furiously began pedaling away. Mike and Dustin weren't too far behind.

---

Carter carefully entered the school with a SWAT team behind him. The second team was on the way, but he thought it would be better to have some idea of what was going on before they got there. Chief Hopper had set up a perimeter around the building which was starting to draw attention, but that was really the least of their worries. The hallways were dark and empty. Despite the fact that Carter knew exactly where One was, there was still something ominous about the completely empty building.

They made it to the big double doors leading to the gym. Two SWAT team members stood on either side of the door and looked to Carter for his signal. Carter nodded and they shoved the door open. A couple of the SWAT guys went in first, followed by Carter. There were three chairs in the middle of the room. One was empty, but Amy and Sarah were sitting in the other two. Carter wanted to run over and help the girls, but there were three people standing in the way.

"Agent Carter. I'm so glad to finally meet you." One said, loud and theatrically. "Welcome to the beginning of the end."

"Just let the kids go and we can deal this out among ourselves." Carter demanded, knowing it was a long shot.

"OK." One said to everyone's surprise. He looked over to Nine and Ten and gave them a little nod. The twins released Amy and Sarah who immediately ran to a slightly confused Carter.

"I don't get it. You're just letting them go?" Carter asked.

"Of course. They served their purpose." One said.

"Which was what exactly?"

"They got you here with enough bodies."

"Bodies?" Carter was still confused, but then he quickly looked at the SWAT team behind him. The leader who was standing right behind Carter was also confused. He was about to ask Carter what was going on, but then his eyes started bleeding. He fell to the ground followed shortly by the rest of the team. Thankfully, Amy and Sarah were still OK, but they were holding close to Carter. Carter was appalled by all the death right behind him, then turned quickly to look at the Legion members on the other end of the room. One was simply standing there with a hint of a smile on his lips while the twins wiped their noses of blood. A small consequence for killing the entire SWAT team. "Why did you leave me?" Carter asked.

"Because you are going to serve another purpose." One said. There was a small thud that came from the side wall of the room. The metal door on that wall suddenly had a giant dent on it. Another time and the door flew off its hinges and Eleven ran in to join Carter.

"What are you doing here?" Carter asked. One laughed a little bit.

"I was expecting you to come, Eleven. So glad you could join us. I think you came just in time too." One said. The lights overhead blinked on and off and there was a loud thunderous *boom* that echoed through the entire school. Amy and Sarah clutched closer to Carter.

"What was that?" asked Carter. The smile on One's face grew as he looked around the room.

"All the bodies, all the blood, all the people who have been there. How could it resist?"

"How could what resist?" Carter already knew the answer to his own question, but he didn't want to be right. There was another *boom*, the lights flickered again and some dust fell from the ceiling. One tilted his head down from the ceiling to look Carter in the eye.

"The Demogorgon."

"Will." Eleven whispered to herself.

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A/N: Thanks to everyone that has stuck with the story and kept reading. I actually have already written the next chapter but I am going to wait and post it on Monday so I can get some comments in the meantime. Please leave a review to let me know how I'm doing.



## 18. Chapter 18: The Demogorgon

Elizabeth's hip was a little sore. But other than that, Eleven pushing her out of the way didn't do anything to her. After the kids ran out, she got her keys and drove to the school. The kids were able to take shortcuts on their bikes, so they surged ahead of Elizabeth and had already gotten to the school by the time she parked right outside of the police line.

"El!" Elizabeth heard Mike's voice scream. Her head quickly turned to see Eleven ducking under the yellow police tape and running towards the gym. Mike and Dustin stayed where they were. Mike wanted to follow Eleven, but he was paralyzed by fear for a moment. He decided that Eleven shouldn't go alone, so he began to duck under the big yellow ribbon when a police officer saw him.

"Hey! You need to stay behind the line!" a police officer yelled, running towards Mike. Mike recognized the officer. It wasn't one of the Coalition agents that Carter had stationed in Hawkins.

"But..." Mike started to say before being interrupted.

"But nothing. This is a possible crime scene and you need to stay behind the line." It was pretty obvious that the officer had no idea what was actually going on. It was also obvious that he didn't see that Eleven was still running across the big baseball field towards the school.

Elizabeth caught up with the boys who slowly backed away from the police line. They felt a little defeated.

"What happened?" asked Elizabeth. Of course, she knew most of what had happened, but she just wanted to make sure there was none of the story that she missed.

"El just ran into the school." Mike said. Apparently Elizabeth hadn't missed anything. She, Mike and Dustin simply stared at the school, knowing that there was nothing they could do.

Suddenly, there was a loud *boom* that came from inside the school

and they could see lights flickering through the frosted windows around the gym. Everybody heard it and looked at the building, afraid for what was going on inside, but only Mike and Dustin really knew what was coming. When there was a second *boom* Elizabeth noticed that the police officer was looking at the school and not the people he was supposed to be keeping behind the yellow tape. Elizabeth made a split second decision. She ducked under the plastic ribbon before anyone could notice and started running across the baseball field. She stopped halfway when she noticed a baseball bat lying on the ground next to the bleachers. She quickly picked it up, thinking it might be of use later on.

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Back inside the school, it felt as though all hell had broken loose. Every light in the room was active and everybody was looking around to see where it would be coming from. Another *boom* rang through the room, but this time they could tell where it was coming from. The floor in the middle of the gym started to crack and splinter.

"Why are you doing this!?" yelled Eleven across the room to One. One was the only person in the room that was smiling. He reached into his big coat and pulled out what looked like a sword with a bunch of wires coming out of it.

"No organization, not even The Coalition, can stop me once my plans are set in motion. The only thing that has a chance is that monster." *Boom.* A couple of floorboards flew up in splinters as a long inhuman hand rose from the hole in the ground. The Demogorgon quickly climbed out, turned to One and opened its mouth, ready to pounce. The monster flew back and stuck to the wall. It started struggling to get away as One started walking closer. "Now it's time to kill it once and for all."

Eleven started crying. She was angry at One, but also sad. She didn't see a monster at all. All she saw was her brother, struggling to get out. One flipped a switch on his sword. It started humming and blue lightning bolts started coming out. Eleven knew that she had to think fast. She looked around the room and saw the dead SWAT team. She used her powers to pick up one of their guns. Eleven had never fired a gun before, but she got the basic idea. She knew that she couldn't stop one, so she took aim at a different target and fired.

Across the room, the bullet hit One's sword in the middle of its electronic components. It exploded in a shower of sparks and One lost concentration, letting the Demogorgon free. When the sparks and the smoke settled, the lights stopped flickering and the monster was nowhere to be seen.

"You idiot!" yelled One as he started walking quickly towards Eleven, pure rage on his face as nobody had ever seen before. "Do you know what you just did!?" Eleven wiped the tears away from her eyes and very calmly said;

"I just saved my brother."

"That's not your brother anymore. He hasn't been there for a while and if you aren't willing to realize that, we're all dead." yelled One. The lights started flickering again. Everyone's hearts started beating a little faster and they frantically searched around the room to see where the monster would appear this time. Suddenly, the lights went dark. It took One's eyes a moment to adjust to the sudden darkness, but when they did, he saw the monster towering over him. Everybody else noticed it at just about the same time. Everyone but One ran away as fast as they could towards the hallways on the edge of the gym. Eleven, Sarah, Amy and Carter made it to the big double doors leading into the main hallway when they heard One yelling from back inside the gym as the monster got him.

They slammed the doors shut and walked towards the glass doors leading to the outside.

"You three need to leave. I can handle things here." Carter said. He wasn't getting any complaint from Amy or Sarah who quickly ran out the doors.

"I'm staying." insisted Eleven. "I can help. I'm the only one with the power to fight them." For once, Carter didn't argue. Instead, he reached into his coat and fished around a little bit before pulling two items out.

"Here." he said, handing one of them to Eleven. Eleven recognized it immediately as the collar that The Coalition developed to inhibit telepathic powers. She looked back up at Carter and nodded slightly

to indicate that she understood what she was supposed to do. She and Carter split up at the end of the hall.

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Mike heard another sound come from the school and his heart skipped a beat in fear of what it could be. He calmed down a little when he saw Amy and Sarah running out towards them. Dustin ducked under the police line despite an officer yelling at him and opened his arms. Amy ran straight into him and Dustin wrapped his arms around her. He allowed her to cry on his shoulder. She had had a rough time.

"Where's El?" Mike asked nervously.

"She insisted on staying inside with Carter." Sarah responded.

"What happened in there?"

"One summoned the Demogorgon and tried to kill it but El destroyed his weapon at the last second."

"Why would she do that?" Mike thought he knew the answer, but he wanted to hear someone else say it.

"She says that Will is still somewhere in there." Mike took a deep breath and looked at the school. He was paralyzed with fear thinking what could be happening to Eleven in there.

---

Carter carefully checked around each corner for Nine or Ten before going anywhere. He was being light on his feet to make as little noise as possible, but apparently the twins were too. There was a beam of light coming from around the next corner. Carter couldn't see anything except a shadow of a person walking towards him. The shadow didn't have long hair, so it couldn't be Eleven or Ten. It must have been Nine. Carter pressed himself flat against the wall right next to the corner and tried to slow his breathing. As soon as he saw Nine, he punched him squarely in the face. Nine was caught off guard and fell to the floor, giving Carter time to attempt to get the collar on him. Carter almost did it, but then was hit by a blinding pain. He dropped the collar and collapsed to the ground.

"Oh... Peter Carter." Nine said, standing up. "It's really almost sorry for things to end like this." He wiped his nose and started walking towards Carter who was writhing on the ground in pain. "But then again, we both know it does have to end." Carter just barely heard what he was saying through the pain. It slowly increased until he almost lost his mind because of it, then stopped suddenly.

Carter assumed for a moment that he had simply died. But then, he opened his eyes to see Nine unconscious on the floor. He looked up and saw Elizabeth with a baseball bat held over her head. She had just swung it with all her might. Carter looked up at Elizabeth.

"Thanks." was all he could think to say.

"No problem." said Elizabeth, catching her breath. It took Carter a moment to gather his thoughts and remember what he was trying to do. When he did remember, he picked the collar up off the floor and slipped it around Nine's neck. He also took out some handcuffs and put them on. Nine didn't move and Carter was a little afraid that he was dead. He put his fingers on Nine's neck and felt for a pulse. It took a moment, but it was there.

"He's just unconscious." Carter announced, just in case Elizabeth was worried too.

"Good... I guess." Elizabeth said. Carter looked at his watch.

"The second SWAT team should be here soon. They'll help us get him somewhere safe."

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Eleven was trying to be as careful as she could, but didn't have the training that Carter did. Her shoes weren't that loud, but she couldn't help them from making a noise whenever they hit the floor. That was probably why Ten was prepared for her when she turned the corner. Eleven had only just noticed her when she was forced back, sliding on the smooth floor.

"I thought you would be a little more careful than that." Ten teased. Eleven took a deep breath in and pushed Ten back as hard as she could. While her opponent was sliding back on the floor. Eleven

stood up and took time to prepare for the next attack. Ten flipped up and started running towards Eleven. Suddenly, one of the doors on the side of the hallway opened up and Ten ran straight into it. Eleven used the time that Ten was caught off guard to run up and get a collar on her neck. Ten raised her hands to take off the collar, but Eleven quickly responded. She pushed her back against the wall. Ten winced a little bit in pain when she hit the wall, then started struggling to move her hands but it was no use.

All the anger that Eleven had ever had towards Ten all bubbled to the surface at once. She increased the force that she was using to push Ten against the wall. Ten struggled a little more and Eleven was expecting her to scream, but instead she just started laughing.

"This is what I told you about a year ago." Ten announced. Eleven thought back to the meeting they had a year ago when Ten was in prison at the Coalition base. "I told you that you would feel true power one day. This is it. I am defenseless and yet you just keep coming. Go ahead. Kill me, enjoy the power." Eleven wanted to give in, but for once the little voice in her head held her back. She lessened the force she put on Ten.

"No." she said. Ten stopped laughing.

"What? Why not?"

"Because I can finally be someone that Mike can be proud of."

"He won't be able to be proud for long if you aren't willing to do anything about the monster."

"That's not a monster." Eleven insisted. "Will is still in there."

"Will is gone and never coming back. What you see now is only surviving on what's left of him." A loud patter of boots came down the hall. The second SWAT team had arrived.

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Some handcuffs had been put on Ten and she had been brought outside to join her brother in the back of an armored van. Carter had gone outside too to talk to some Coalition agents that had shown up

and to deal with the growing crowd outside of the school that wanted to know what was wrong. He walked out with Elizabeth and as soon as they got out the door, Mike ran towards them across the police line with a very tired police officer chasing after him.

"It's OK, officer." Carter said. The officer didn't need to be told anymore. He went back over to the line so he could just stand and not have to deal with kids who didn't listen to him.

"Is El OK?" asked Mike.

"She's more OK. She just captured Ten." Mike smiled and laughed a little. He had always believed in his girlfriend but she never ceased to amaze him.

"Where is she now?"

"She's with the SWAT team sweeping the school, trying to figure out what happened to One. They were reluctant to take her along, but I insisted that she is the only thing that could protect them if they found him." Mike kept smiling. "I really would like to keep talking, but I have to go and deal with some stuff so we can get this whole ordeal behind us." Carter leaned towards Elizabeth and gave her a little kiss before walking away to take care of official Coalition work. Mike walked back over to Amy and Dustin with Elizabeth.

"Why do you have a baseball bat?" he asked her.

"That's actually a pretty fun story." Elizabeth said with a smile.

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The SWAT team and Eleven carefully proceeded through the dark building. They started at the gym and made their way through all the hallways in the school. SWAT guys checked every classroom, but they didn't find anything. They started to finish their loop and head back to the gym while checking out the last couple of hallways on the way. Eventually, they ended up outside Carter's chemistry room, it was the last place they hadn't checked. A quick look inside revealed that there was nothing there, just like everywhere else. The leader took off his helmet and walked over to Eleven.

"I don't think there's anything here." he said. Eleven closed her eyes and felt around with her mind for a moment. She didn't know if she would find anything, or even if she could. But she thought it would be best to try. The leader grew impatient with the strange girl in front of him. "I'm going to call it in." he said, picking up a radio off of his vest.

"Wait." said Eleven, her eyes snapping open.

"Why?" asked the leader. The dark hallway lit up as all the florescent lights came on at once. They all went off again then started flickering randomly. A stream of dust flew from the cinder block wall in front of the group. The SWAT team quickly got in formation and aimed their weapons at the crack in the wall. The leader's eyes went wide as the monster fell out of the crack in the wall and got on its feet. The entire team was stunned, waiting for the leader's orders but he didn't say anything until the monster opened its mouth and started to charge.

"Fire!" the leader yelled.

"No!" screamed Eleven, throwing out her hands as she jumped in between the SWAT team and the monster before any bullets could be fired. A shower of sparks came from each of the SWAT guns as the internal workings in them welded together spontaneously. The SWAT guys all tried to pull the triggers, but nothing happened when they did. Eleven's nose and ears started bleeding, then she collapsed to the ground. Her eyes closed as she fainted. Nobody on the SWAT team dared to go any nearer to her out of pure terror for the monster that was walking ever closer.

The monster got to Eleven and towered over her. Its strange mouth closed completely and it picked Eleven up into its long thin arms. Eleven regained consciousness and opened her eyes to see a faceless head. It didn't have eyes, but it seemed like it was staring back at her. She didn't panic or try to get away. It took a lot of effort, but she was able to open her mouth and very weakly say;

"Will." Eleven lifted her hand up to the monster's head and rested it where its cheek would be if it had a face. She dug deep into herself and found the last of her strength that remained. She worked hard to



find every memory of her brother that she had. She used the last of her energy not to attack or try to get away, but just to communicate. To project the image of Will that she had into the monster.

Eleven fell back to the ground, the monster had dropped her. It started writhing around and fell to the ground beside her. Eleven didn't stop. She used all of the energy that she had to keep sending her message to the Demogorgon. It kept struggling on the floor for a moment, then suddenly became still. Eleven stared up at the florescent light above her. It flickered on and off like it had been for another couple of seconds, then stayed on. Eleven smiled as the darkness closed in around her and she went to sleep for what she was sure was the last time as she used the last of her power.

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A/N: The next chapter will be coming on Wednesday. The next chapter will also probably be the last chapter (I'm trying to decide if I should write an epilogue). Please leave a review even if it is just some short thoughts. I really enjoy getting them. Thanks for reading, everyone!

## 19. Chapter 19: The Light

The first thing she noticed was the soft white light ahead of her. It was warm and welcoming as the rays danced on her skin. She couldn't make out any shapes, just the light. The second thing she noticed was the beeping sound. It was an electronic beat coming from off to her side.

"Look who's awake." said a familiar voice. Eleven blinked a couple of times until her vision focused and she could make out Carter standing in front of her. She looked around the room a little more. She was definitely in a hospital room. Joyce was at the side of her bed, holding her hand and smiling brightly as tears of joy fell from her eyes. Eleven's first question wasn't what anyone, including Eleven, was expecting;

"How long was I out for?" Carter looked at his watch.

"It's been just about two days since the ambulance picked you up from the school." he said.

"What happened?" Eleven asked. "I thought I died."

"Technically you did." Carter said. "Your heart stopped so you were lucky there was a defibrillator right there in the hall. One of the SWAT guys reacted quickly and started CPR. But technically, you were dead for two minutes."

"Wow." was the only thing Eleven could think to say for a while. "I was sure I was gone. I gave everything for... Will!" She had suddenly remembered what she used all her strength for. "Where is he!? Is he OK!?"

"I'm fine." came a bright and cheerful voice from the other side of the bed. Will was smiling as bright as ever. "I'm back to normal."

"The monster?" Eleven asked.

"Is gone." Will assured his sister. "You got rid of it. It's gone forever." Eleven slumped back down in her bed, resting her head on the

pillow. For the first time in a long time, she felt completely at peace. Carter fidgeted around uncomfortably in the corner where he was standing. He didn't really know what to do.

"I'm going to head out and say that you're OK. Everyone's in the waiting room." Carter shuffled out while Eleven and Joyce started making some light conversation. It had been a while since they could completely enjoy that luxury.

Carter walked down the brightly lit hospital hallway with a small smile on his face the whole time. He couldn't help but feel warm inside. The smile disappeared a little bit when he heard loud fast footsteps from around the corner. After everything that had happened, Carter was a little afraid for what it could be. He was happy when it wasn't scary at all. It was in fact Jonathan Byers running towards his sister's room. Jonathan stopped when he saw Carter.

"Is she OK?" he asked nervously. Carter smiled and laughed a little.

"She's fine. In fact, she just woke up." Jonathan perked up a little, but it was apparent that he wouldn't be completely comfortable until he talked to her.

Carter continued down the hall, turned the corner and walked through the glass door to the waiting room. Everyone that was there had been there for hours. Everyone except for Mike. He had been there for the entire two days waiting nervously to hear if his girlfriend was going to wake up. He had only been able to get a couple hours of sleep in the uncomfortable chair he was sitting in but he wasn't feeling tired. Just worried. As soon as Carter opened the door, everyone looked directly at him. Mike stood up.

"Is she OK?" Mike asked.

"She just woke up." Carter said. Mike ran straight past Carter and down the hall towards his girlfriend. "I might give her a little time to rest!" Carter called after him. It was no use. The rest of the kids ran past Carter to go see Eleven. This time, Carter didn't try to tell them to wait. He knew it would just be a waste of time. Instead, he left the hospital completely and went home to start working on a very

important letter.

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The hospital didn't clear Eleven to leave for a while. Eleven thought it was a little unfair because Will was allowed to go almost immediately. But of course, they couldn't really explain to the doctors what had happened with him. She got pretty bored most of the time. But all of her friends brought her books and games which helped a little bit. The one thing that nobody else understood was that Eleven missed school while she was in the hospital. Everyone else would have loved the chance to take some time off and not worry about work, but not Eleven. To try to cheer her up a little, Mike brought in some math homework as a joke. The joke backfired when Eleven got really excited and happily did all the work.

She was finally able to get out of the hospital just before the last day of school. The doctor said that she needed to stay home and rest, but Joyce thought it would be fine if she just attended the small party that everyone had planned after chemistry class.

"Welcome back!" the whole group cheered when Eleven walked into the room. They had some colorful party decorations up but the main attraction was the big table at the front of the room. Instead of having scary graphs or surveillance photos like it did for the rest of the year, it was covered with food and drinks.

"Thanks, guys." said Eleven. Her face turned a little red. She felt embarrassed that everyone was looking at her. Mike noticed.

"Anyone want something to eat?" he said, going over to get some food. Everyone was hungry and went over to get some food instead of staring at Eleven. There wasn't anything that would actually be considered a meal on the table, mainly just desserts. Everyone got their fill and split up into a couple of small conversations. Eventually though, they all got in a big circle for one last big meeting as a group.

"I know that nobody wants to talk about it, but it's going to annoy me if I don't know." Lucas started. "What happened to One?" Carter set down his cup of lemonade and took a deep breath.

"I don't know. Nobody does." he said. "I don't know if the monster got

him, or if he's still out there somewhere, or... I don't know. That's something we'll just have to look out for."

"I don't know if the monster got him either." Will said. "I don't remember a lot of what it did." Will had become a little more open when talking about the monster. The group made it very clear that they knew the difference between it and him. He was never the monster and he had almost never control of what it did. The mood in the room had gone down a little and Carter didn't think that was good for the party that it was supposed to be.

"The good news is that Nine and Ten are safely in custody." he said. A couple people picked their heads up and began to smile. "They aren't in Indianapolis like Ten was last year. We moved them somewhere much more secure."

"Where?" Dustin asked.

"I can't say. Just know that it is extremely unlikely that we will ever be hearing from them again."

"What about Mallory?" Eleven asked. At first she was skeptical about joining forces with a member of the Brenner family. But Mallory had proved that she was a changed person and on their side and Eleven hoped the consequences for what she had done before wouldn't be too severe.

"She was sentenced by a court within The Coalition." Carter said. "They found her guilty of almost all the charges against her. But considering how much she helped us, she's going to be working with The Coalition to help find the last remainders of The Legion instead of going to prison."

"I have some news too." announced Lucy with a smile, deciding to change the subject a little. Everyone turned to look at her. "Stan, my stepdad, got a better job offer here, so I don't have to move to California!"

"That's great, Lucy!" said Amy. Carter was smiling from behind his desk.

"Did he tell you what company gave him the offer?" he asked. Lucy's eyes looked up at the ceiling for a moment as she tried to remember.

"I think he told me, but I forgot. The only thing I heard is that we don't have to move."

"He got an offer at Morley Holdings Incorporated... which is currently under Coalition control."

"You did this?" asked Lucy, her smile only getting bigger. Carter kept smiling and calmly took a sip of his lemonade.

"I think it's the least I could do." he said with a sly smile.

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Amy and Dustin had physics together right after lunch. It was the only one that only the two of them had together. The teacher had finished all the actual teaching that he had wanted to do for the year and since they were only in middle school, they didn't have to take a final. The teacher really didn't have anything planned for the last day, so he just gave them a free day. It was a pretty big class room. The front of the room had a bunch of small desks for the students to sit in during lectures, but the back of the room had a couple of bigger tables for lab work. Amy and Dustin were able to get the back corner of the room all to themselves. Most of the rest of the class was being pretty loud, but neither of them really noticed.

"I have something I wanted to ask you." Amy said. Dustin had no idea what was coming, so he was a little scared.

"What's that?" he asked.

"My dad grew up in England." Amy started to say.

"Interesting to know, but that doesn't really sound much like a question." Dustin joked. Amy laughed.

"Let me finish." she said. Dustin nodded in agreement. "My dad grew up in England and I've never been out of America. So, this summer, the whole family is going on vacation to England for two months." Dustin was a little sad that he wouldn't get to spend the summer with Amy, but she seemed so excited about it that he tried not to show it.

"That sounds like a lot of fun." he said.

"That's what I said." Amy paused a moment. "So... you wanna come with?"

"Yeah, sure." Dustin laughed.

"I'm completely serious." Dustin looked into Amy's eyes and it took him a minute to figure out that she really wasn't kidding.

"You're serious?" he asked in disbelief.

"Totally. My parents said; 'you should ask that boyfriend of yours if he wants to come with'." Amy did an unflattering impression of her parents. "So... what do you say?"

"I mean... I'll have to ask my parents but... yes. That would be awesome. Plus, maybe I can actually meet your parents instead of just watching them through a closet door." Amy laughed a little too much at that.

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Carter had the last hour of the day free. He spent the time starting to clean up his classroom. The teachers had the whole next day in school to organize things as they needed, but he liked to get things like this out of the way early. The last bell of the day rang, announcing that the school year was over. The hall outside Carter's door got really loud, but quieted down in just a couple of minutes. Carter wasn't too surprised when he got a knock at the door. Elizabeth was standing on the other side.

"Hi." she said, with a giddy smile. She came in, closed the door and they shared a short kiss. Elizabeth kept smiling, but sighed a little bit.

"Is something wrong?" asked Carter.

"No, not really." Elizabeth's smile was still there but it faded a little bit. "Just... what happens now?"

"Now?"

"Now... that your mission is done. Everything with The Legion and

the Demogorgon is all over." Carter sighed.

"Usually, I would go back to New York and wait for my next assignment." He paused a little bit while Elizabeth looked down at the ground in disappointment. "But I'm not going to do that." Elizabeth looked back up at Carter. She looked a little more confused than disappointed.

"Why not?"

"I sent in my resignation yesterday." Elizabeth was shocked.

"Why?" she asked. Carter started walking slowly over to his desk.

"I've known for a while that this was going to be my last mission." He opened the top desk drawer with his key and got something out of it. He started walking back to Elizabeth, hiding whatever he had gotten out of the desk in his hand. "I've got Tim and Sarah now. Not to mention that I really enjoy teaching." Carter took a deep breath. "And being a secret agent was the only thing stopping me from doing this." He opened his hand to reveal a small black box. He got down on his knee as Elizabeth covered her mouth while gasping. Inside the box was a diamond ring. "Elizabeth Maple... will you marry me?" Tears of joy started falling from Elizabeth's eyes. She took her hands away from her face and moved her mouth to say something, but no words came out. She took a deep breath and tried again. This time, Carter heard her faintly say;

"Yes." Carter sprung up to his feet and wrapped his fiancée in a giant hug. It seemed to last forever. When they finally did separate, he pulled the ring out of the box and slowly slipped it onto Elizabeth's finger.

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The whole Byers house was in good spirits that night. Everyone was healthy and nobody was stuck in any alternate dimensions, so they felt pretty good. Jonathan had gotten back from college the week before Will and Eleven were finished with school. He got back right on the day that the hospital let Eleven go home. He spent most of the week caring for his sister who wasn't supposed to get out of bed too much. But on the last day of school, he baked a big feast to celebrate.



Joyce was pretty surprised when she got home from work, but happy nonetheless. The mood of the house was pretty high and they made some plans for the summer while blasting the radio. It was pretty late before the evening died down and everyone noticed how tired they were.

Will got his pajamas on, brushed his teeth, then turned out the lights. He got in bed and closed his eyes before he realized that something was annoying him. He opened his eyes to see a bright light coming from the wall. It was a small night light. After Will had been lost in the Upside Down two and a half years prior, he found himself deathly afraid of the dark. He hadn't been able to sleep well until Joyce had bought him that night light. But something had changed in Will. He didn't find it helpful, just annoying. He got out of bed and pulled it out of its socket. Will looked up to see his completely dark room. There was a little light streaming past his curtains allowed Will to find his way back to the bed, but he couldn't see much else. Will pulled the covers back over him and tried to go to sleep. When Will ran away, he still needed the night light to sleep. So, he was surprised when he found that he wasn't uncomfortable in the darkness. It just seemed right to him. He felt at home. Will closed his eyes and went to sleep.

A couple of moments later, Will opened his eyes to see a dark, decrepit version of his room. Will knew that he was back in the Upside Down, but it also felt like he wasn't. It felt more like he was still asleep in his room but piloting an image of himself around that shadow realm. Will got out of bed and started walking around. He left the house, somehow knowing where he had to go.

When he had been trapped in the Upside Down, he felt cold and scared. Nowhere felt safe. This time, he didn't feel like that at all. There was no fear, not even any cold. In fact, he just felt powerful. Will made his way down the familiar streets on the way to his goal. After a couple of minutes, he saw it. Hawkins Middle School. The doors were all unlocked so Will easily went inside.

The alien-seeming vines that populated much of the Upside Down were thicker in the gym. The thing that Will was looking for was right in the middle. Tangled and imprisoned in the middle of the vines was One.

"Bravo." One said as soon as he saw Will. "I would applaud, but..." He nodded his head to indicate the vines that ensnared his hands and prevented them from moving.

"What for?" asked Will.

"I'm almost powerless in this dimension, but I can still see everything. You gave a good performance in the hospital there. None of what you said to Eleven there was true. Was it?"

"No." Will said in shame. "The monster is still there. I don't think it will ever be completely gone, but now I'm in control." No argument came from One. "It only comes out when I let it and I tell it what to do when it does."

"Which means that you're also still tied to this place." One said, rolling his head around to indicate the entire Upside Down.

"Yes. I'm in charge here. That also means that I'm in charge of what happens to you." One laughed a little to dismiss Will's threat.

"You won't do anything to me. I saw what Eleven did when she captured Ten. She's killed people before yet she still couldn't bring herself to kill that girl that had caused her so much trouble over the years. She's gone soft living with you and your family." Will took a deep breath to give him some time to think about the next thing he was going to say.

"My sister saw too much of herself in Ten. But when I look at you, all I see is the man that put me and my friends through hell. If you think I don't like you, imagine what the monster is going to do to you when I let it out."

"You wouldn't." One said. Will's demeanor didn't change. He stayed calm as his eyes simply bored into One's face. Will Byers was the first person in two thousand years to see One's current emotion. Fear.

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"Please welcome, for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. Peter and Elizabeth Carter!" the singer of the wedding band announced. A ruckus of applause erupted through the reception hall as Carter and Elizabeth

walked in. Carter was wearing a fancy tuxedo and Elizabeth a long white dress. The loudest and most obnoxious applause was coming from the kids table that consisted of Mike, Eleven, Lucas, Dustin, Will, Amy, Sarah, Lucy, Tim and a couple of Tim's friends. Tim had been offered a spot at the head table with Carter and Elizabeth, but he thought it would be more fun to sit with the kids. Nobody argued with him. Sarah didn't clap as loudly. She was hoping that she wouldn't draw attention to herself so nobody would see her crying. Somebody did.

"Are you OK, Sarah?" Lucy asked.

"I'm more than OK." she said. "I'm just so happy right now." She stopped clapping for a moment to wipe her eyes.

"So, are you staying with them?" Lucas asked.

"Yeah. Carter and Elizabeth offered to officially adopt me about a week before the school year ended. They said I shouldn't tell anyone until it's official. But since yesterday, it is." Sarah said. More tears of happiness streamed down her face. She got a general congratulations from the group.

"The five of you are going to be so happy." Eleven said. Sarah started nodding, but then stopped when she got confused.

"Five of us?" she asked. She started counting on her fingers; "Me, Tim, Carter, Elizabeth... Who's the fifth one?" Almost everyone else was just as confused and looked at Eleven for an explanation.

"You couldn't tell? I thought it was obvious." Eleven said.

"I could tell." said Tim. "But I wasn't sure so I didn't say anything." Everyone just assumed that whatever 'it' was, it was something that Tim and Eleven figured out with their powers.

"What is it?" Mike asked. He was smiling but getting a little impatient.

"It's..." Eleven's head turned to look around the room. "Oh!" she exclaimed. Eleven quickly got up and ran across the room. The rest of the group following closely behind. They got to the head table to find

Carter and Elizabeth enjoying their first moments alone that day while everyone else focused on the food on their plates. Eleven snatched a wine glass out of Elizabeth's hand just before she took a sip and set it down on the table. "I wouldn't drink that if I were you." she said. Elizabeth got just as confused as everyone else.

"Why not?" she asked. Eleven smiled and took a deep breath.

"Have you thought about taking a pregnancy test recently?" Elizabeth's eyes went wide. She turned to Carter who was just as surprised as her. Neither did or said anything until Carter suddenly leaned in and planted a big kiss on his wife.

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After the food, the dancing started. It started off pretty calm but got a little crazier as the night went on. By about 10:30, everyone was tired out. The only people that were still on the dance floor were Carter and Elizabeth, slowly swaying in each others' arms. Tim was off at the side of the room playing with the couple of his friends that were still there while the rest of the kids sat in a big group of chairs next to the dance floor.

"When do you guys leave?" Lucas asked Amy and Dustin.

"Three days." Amy said. They were beyond excited about their trip to England together.

"Sounds cool." Mike said. "Send us a post card."

"I'll make sure to." Dustin said. Everyone was tired and just relaxed back in their chairs for a minute until Amy suddenly perked up.

"Hey guys!" she exclaimed with a big obnoxious smile.

"What?" asked Lucy.

"Remember when I first thought that Carter and Elizabeth *might* be dating and you all said I was crazy?" Mike groaned a little. He had really hoped that Amy had forgotten about that.

"Yes." he said with a sigh.

"Well..." Amy said, building up to the next sentence. "I told you so."

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A/N: First; I would like to start off by thanking everyone who has read the story. Please leave a review, I will be writing more in the future and would really like to know what I did well and what I could do better.

Second; this is *probably* the last chapter of this story. If you would like an epilogue to see where everyone ends up in a couple of years, please let me know. I'm trying to decide if it's worth writing it. Other than that, I am going to take a break from writing for a while. The earliest you could reasonably expect anything from me would probably be in mid-July when I expect to have some time. But I do plan to write more at some point. I don't know if I will write about Stranger Things (possible an entirely new story line after I watch season 2) or what.

On a related note, I have watched the Stranger Things season 2 trailer 37 times in the last 24 hours. I think that was an entirely good use of my time.

UPDATE: I have written an epilogue (as you can probably see because there's still another chapter).

## 20. Epilogue

Will opened the door to his apartment and went inside. He locked it behind him and promptly sat down on the couch. It had been a long day and he was looking forward to a rest. The telephone was on a small table right next to the couch. Will pressed the flashing red button on it to listen to the voicemail he had waiting for him. It was from his sister. She had just called to see how he was doing. He made a small note on a piece of paper to call her back when he got a chance. Everything with The Legion had happened ten years prior. Since then, Will had finished high school with the rest and gone off to NYU like his brother. NYU wasn't the school he had originally wanted to go to. In fact, he had gotten accepted to some schools that he preferred. The fact was though that NYU was in New York City and Will knew that The Coalition's headquarters was also there.

Ever since Eleven saved Will from completely turning into the monster he started to develop certain abilities. They certainly weren't as powerful as Eleven's, but they were still there. One of the main ones was that he could listen to radio signals as they went through the air. It was a lot to deal with at first. Especially once he moved to New York. Trying to sort through all of the noises going through the air was difficult to say the least but after a while he was able to do it. It didn't take too long to locate the building where The Coalition's headquarters was. Once he figured it out, Will filed that information away and tried to forget about it until he was done with school. After he got his degree, Will got a job in the city and an apartment as close to The Coalition as he could get. His job wasn't anything special, but it allowed him to maintain a low profile while keeping his ear to the ground.

Will allowed himself a moment to relax on the couch before he opened his mind to all the radio signals coming from the building just across the street. Most of the things he hear were normal and useless but every once and a while he would hear something interesting. On this particular day, the amount of useless drivel seemed to be down and the amount of interesting things were up by comparison. It took Will a while to realize it, but apparently The Coalition had found one of the last remaining pieces of The Legion hidden in Chicago.

Will got up from the couch and made sure that the door was locked. He then went to his bedroom and laid down on the bed. He knew that it would take The Coalition at least another three hours until they were able to prepare a team and go after the lead they found in Chicago. Will could get there much faster. Will closed his eyes and it wasn't long until he was in the Upside Down on his way. He felt that as long as he was tied to the monster, he might try to do some good. Distances were strange in the Upside Down and Will felt as if he had some control over them as well. It only took him about thirty minutes until he was right where he needed to be.

Coming out of the Upside Down, Will found himself in some office park. He looked around for a moment to get his bearings. To one side, he could only see some boring brick office buildings. To the other side though, he could see the outlines of some skyscrapers a couple miles away. Will walked into the building in front of him and proceeded up the stairs to the second floor and into an office.

"Hello, do you have an appointment, sir?" the receptionist asked. Will ignored him and just continued on. "Sir. Sir!" the receptionist called, but Will didn't react. The receptionist picked up his phone and made a call. Most likely calling some sort of security team. Will continued past some cubicles until he was standing in front of a big mahogany door. He tried the handle but it was locked. That wasn't too much of a problem. Will slipped back into the Upside Down and walked straight in. When he came back out, he saw a very shocked white-haired man in a suit sitting behind a big wooden desk.

"Who the hell are you?" the man asked. Will chose to ignore his question.

"Are you Wallace Anderson?"

"Um... yes." Wallace said, very scared for what was going to happen to him.

"You were a scientist recruited to The Legion about ten years ago and have been attempting to continue One's mission since then. Correct?"

"Yes." Wallace said. "How do you know about The Legion?" Will didn't have time to answer, but he didn't want to anyway. Doors on

either side of the office burst open and four men with assault rifles ran in. They were the security team that the receptionist must have called.

"Get on the ground!" one of the men yelled, waving his gun at Will. Instead of listening to him, Will leaped forward towards Wallace. It took a moment for everyone around to register what was happening. But before they could, it was too late. Both Will and Wallace had vanished into thin air.

Wallace had spent a lot of his career researching the Upside Down after One disappeared. The only real conclusion that he was able to reach was that he didn't want to ever go there. He stood up and tried to look around but couldn't really see anything. It took him a moment to figure out that it was because his glasses were broken and he was trying to look through a white web or cracks. Without his glasses, he could see just fine, but things were just a little blurry. He could easily figure out that he was still in his office. Or at least, something that resembled his office. It was so dark... and cold. The only thing that was exactly the same was the young man standing on the other side of the room. He looked angry. Almost like he was getting ready to strike.

Mike had been grocery shopping and had a lot of things to bring home. He decided to just carry it all which wasn't a problem until he got to the door to his apartment. He juggled some things around so that he had a free hand to get the key out of his pocket. It was a difficult balancing act, but eventually he got it. He pushed the door open to find Eleven already in the kitchen cooking dinner.

"Hey!" she greeted him. "How was your day?" After graduating from Hawkins High School, both Mike and Eleven got full scholarships to go to Stanford. They appreciated the scholarships, but they found it a little strange that they were offered them without applying for them. They asked Carter, but he insisted that he didn't have anything to do with it. After getting their bachelors degrees, both of them stayed at Stanford for graduate school. Mike was studying medicine while Eleven was working on a degree in theoretical physics. It took her a while to come to terms with the fact that she was going to be a scientist because of all the scientists she had met in her early life. Their scholarships covered housing during their undergraduate years



so it made a lot of sense to stay in dorms. Once they got into graduate school though, the scholarships stopped covering housing so they got a small apartment together about a half mile from campus.

"My day was pretty good. I finally turned in the last of my papers. How about you?" Mike asked while setting all groceries down on the small kitchen table. Their second year of graduate school was drawing to a close. Both of them liked the work, but were excited to get a little time off.

"I'm doing pretty well." Eleven said while stirring a pot of noodles. "I only had two classes today because Professor Hensley was sick." Mike just stared at his girlfriend while she cooked dinner. Dustin and Amy had gotten engaged and married pretty shortly after they had finished college. The wedding was wonderful. It was the first time since high school had ended that the whole group had seen each other again. In Mike's mind, only one thing was wrong. He wanted to propose to Eleven with all his heart but since they were still in school, their lives were just too chaotic. He thought it would be better to wait a little bit until they both had jobs and the uncertainty of the coming years was behind them.

Once dinner was ready, Mike and Eleven sat down on the couch. The TV was on in the background but they weren't paying too much attention to it.

"Did you hear back from any of those internships you applied for?" Mike asked while Eleven looked through the mail. They were planning to stay in California that summer and do some internships. But the school year was drawing to a close and nobody had responded to either of them.

"Not yet." Eleven said as she flipped through a bunch of ads, looking to see if there was anything interesting in that day's mail. "Oh!" she exclaimed, pulling a letter out of the bunch. "We got a letter from the Carters." She opened it and both of them started reading it at the same time. It was a letter of congratulations from Carter and Elizabeth. They were still living in Hawkins. Both Sarah and Tim had already graduated from high school. Tim was going to Harvard and Sarah was in Florida working for NASA. Their youngest child was born about nine months after the wedding. It was a boy who they

named Jeff. At this point though, he was about ten years old and about to start middle school.

"That's nice of them to send this." Mike said. He looked over the hand-written letter again. "I find it kind of amazing that Elizabeth's hand writing looks neater than most fonts on the computer." Eleven laughed.

"Yeah. Me too." She flipped through the rest of the mail while Mike read through the letter from the Carters another time. The two letters on the bottom of the pile caught her attention. There was one addressed to her and one addressed to Mike. They were from some business and Eleven was about to dismiss them as spam when something caught her eye. Her letter wasn't addressed to 'Elle Byers'. Instead, it was addressed to 'Eleven'. Very few people knew her by that name. "Mike." she said.

"Yeah?" Mike asked, his mouth full of pasta. Eleven handed him the letter in question. Mike looked it over for a moment. "That's weird." he said after swallowing his food. Eleven opened the envelope and read out loud;

"Dear Eleven,

Multi-National Holdings Incorporated hereby invites you to take part in a work experience opportunity this summer. Please visit our office in San Francisco this Saturday for details." Mike opened his letter and found the same thing. He thought for a moment.

"Saturday is tomorrow." he announced. In the back of both of their minds was that this could be something dangerous. But they hadn't had to deal with actual danger for over ten years so it wasn't their first though.

The next day, Mike and Eleven drove up into the city and found the building in question. It was a tall office building in the middle of downtown. They walked into the huge marble lobby. A bunch of people in suits were busily making their way to the elevators as the work day began and the reception desk was almost empty.

"Hello, is there something I can help you with?" the friendly

receptionist asked.

"Yes." Mike said. "We're looking for Multi-National Holdings Incorporated. We're pretty sure their office is in this building but they aren't listed on the directory."

"Do you have an appointment with anyone specific?" the receptionist asked.

"Uh... maybe." Eleven said. "We got these letters and we're not exactly sure what to do." Eleven and Mike showed the woman their letters. She seemed to recognize them.

"Oh. Right this way." she said. She stepped out from behind the reception desk and started walking. Mike and Eleven followed. She led them through some back hallways and into an empty elevator. After turning a key and pressing some buttons, Mike and Eleven were a little surprised that the Elevator started going down instead of up. Their fear peaked. They worried that they had made some wrong decision in coming here but they didn't show it to the woman that was still in the elevator with them.

Their fears went down a little bit when the elevator doors opened and they saw a slightly familiar face waiting for them. Eleven tried really hard to remember where she had seen this man before, but couldn't figure it out.

"Hello." the man said. "You probably don't remember me. I'm Agent Matthews." Suddenly something clicked in both Eleven and Mike's minds. This man was the Coalition agent that ran the Coalition base in Indianapolis when they were young. A lot of things from the past couple of years started to make sense.

"You were the one that offered us our scholarships." Eleven said.

"Yes I was." Matthews said. "I was also the one that offered you the internship here. Hopefully that will lead to a job." Both Mike and Eleven nodded along a little. "Welcome to The Coalition."

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A/N: This is the end of the story. I've had a great time writing it and I

hope that you've had a great time reading it. I am going to take a break from writing for now and probably won't start again at least until mid-July when I'm back in the US. Please leave some comments. What did you think of the story? How was the writing? What can I do better? Again, thanks to everyone and I hope to see you again with whatever I write next.